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*A BIOGRAPHY OF THE GREEK PEOPLE*



# A BIOGRAPHY OF THE GREEK PEOPLE

BY

**CECIL FAIRFIELD LAVELL**

PROFESSOR OF THE HISTORY OF THOUGHT IN GRINNELL COLLEGE



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**To JOHN HANSEN THOMAS MAIN,  
President of Grinnell College 1906–1931**

**DEAR PRESIDENT MAIN:**

I think you would approve of this book. And I know that wherever you are and whatever you are doing, you will smile on my enterprise and wave your hand in the old large, benignant gesture. I wish, indeed, that before you left us we could have talked over the chapter on your well-beloved Plato, but at least you liked the idea of it when I told you what I was trying to do. I can still hear you repeat the prayer of Socrates: 'Beloved Pan and all ye other gods who haunt this place....' a prayer that was nearer your heart than even the *Da mihi, Domine, scire quod sciendum est*, though I remember we agreed that the *what is worth knowing* — so admirable and so unusual a thing to pray for — was very Greek in its stress on 'the essential thing.' We used to have some good talks about those Greeks, though you saw their limitations clearly enough too. So here is my book about them, and I am asking your blessing on it, adapting that prayer a little and making it — 'Grant, O Lord, that I have told what was worth telling.'

**CECIL FAIRFIELD LAVELL**



## PREFACE

A NUMBER of years ago I was asked by a senior student, a colleague of another department, and a lawyer — all within one week — to suggest a history that would tell who the Greeks were and what gave them their amazing fame. I was surprisingly at a loss. There were a number of excellent books, of course. But their arrangement was that of historical and classical scholars writing for historical and classical students, and following an academic convention by which the Greeks were seen almost wholly as organized into city-states. Athens and Sparta, Corinth and Miletus, and scores of other cities were the *dramatis personæ*, and the action was centered around political adventures and constitutional adjustments.

Now the city-state organization of the Greeks was of quite vital consequence and their political doings were both fascinating and instructive. Yet valuable as such narratives were within their limits, the limits excluded much that was of paramount importance and included much that to most present-day minds is of no importance at all.<sup>1</sup> So I decided to see — as time and energy might permit — what could be done, and this book is the result. Whether it will serve its purpose or not, I do not know until it is tried, but at least the purpose is clear and is worth aiming at. It is to tell the story of the ancient Greeks with a view to seeing and showing what they did that permanently mattered.

<sup>1</sup> Thus, Oman's *History of Greece*, written by a distinguished Oxford scholar of our own day, gives one hundred and thirty pages to the Peloponnesian War and just half a page to Socrates.

I found, however, that to do this involved me in an unforeseen — and for some time unrealized — dilemma. It must frequently happen to a historian as to a novelist that he becomes interested in a field to be explored, makes a preliminary map, follows up his trails and sets down his discoveries, and finds when he gets through that he has come out not at all where he expected to. That this had been my own case was hard at first to believe — even when it was pointed out to me by an acute and friendly critic — because my original intention had remained intact. That intention was, as I have said, to narrate as clearly as I could the essential achievements of the Greek people. But the word ‘essential’ involves a personal judgment. The realm of truth is not a democracy. All facts are by no means equal, and no historian can or wants to tell all of them. He must select, and the value of his narrative will depend largely on the basis of his selection.

But that selection may be and often is automatic and unconscious, when as one goes ahead the characters come alive of their own accord, take their places unexpectedly but none the less positively in foreground or background, and write for themselves their own plot. Which turns out to have been my own experience. I could not eliminate the city-state and its affairs any more than a painter can eliminate the ground that his figures stand on. But it seemed clear that in this particular story politics mattered less than philosophy. To do the very thing I had set out to do I was compelled to see the story of the Greek people as the epic of Greek thought.

For the Greeks are and ought to be interesting to a modern primarily as pioneers of the western way of regarding both ourselves and our world of people and things — pioneers

whose inquisitive and creative genius determined the direction and forms of much of our intellectual life to this day. It might be supposed that if this is so my dilemma would be solved by the simple expedient of concentrating on Greek thought. But thought is one of those elusive things that become unintelligible when they are considered by themselves. It has to be considered in relation to the conditions that stimulate and direct it, and the less we do so consider it the more sure we can be that we are emptying it of all value — as both Francis Bacon and Immanuel Kant, each in his own way, long ago pointed out. Thought and facts, that is to say, create one another.

Now the Greeks, with all their subtlety, were a practical people, even if their notions of what was practical were not quite ours. The whole point of thinking, as they conceived it, was to solve problems by finding the essential and universal in them, and if the solution they reached was never complete, it did come to be one of the richest and most fruitful answers to the riddle of life ever set forth. It is illustrated in the Parthenon and the *Antigone* as well as in Plato, and it is the best clue to the understanding of an extraordinarily single-minded people. As the Hebrews failed when they forgot the living reality of Jehovah, the Greeks failed when they forgot the living reality of what they called Philosophy.

So in recording the flow and interaction of events and reflections — but stressing reflections on the *why* and *how* and to *what end* of it all — I have felt that I was really telling the story of the Greeks — believing that if they are to be understood and their place in the history of mankind estimated in true perspective, they should be studied in the things they did that were of permanent value: in their strength, not their

weakness; in their best and most characteristic forms of expression, not those in which they failed. This opens up a debatable question, no doubt, but for good or ill it is the principle on which my story has been told.<sup>1</sup>

One confession ought to be made. I have found myself unable to decide on any consistent standard of spelling. It seems clear that in discussing the Greeks one should say Zeus, Athena, and Odysseus, not Jupiter, Minerva, and Ulysses. And it is believed by many that we should adopt also the Greek spelling for Greek names. In many cases this seems reasonable enough, but I cannot convince myself that I ought to write Sokrates or Aischulos, Perikles or Thoukudides. It is a comfort to remember that even the learned make no effort to be consistent in referring to cities of another speech. The Italians do not say Naples or Florence, but we do. London has to resign itself to being Londres in a French newspaper and Köln to being Cologne. And the Greeks themselves were just as careless in regard to names of persons as well as places. Herodotus did not trouble himself in the least about calling his Persian and Egyptian kings what they called themselves — was in fact far less particular than we are. At any rate, it seemed impossible to be consistent without being occasionally ludicrous, so I have followed no plan whatever, adopting in each case the spelling that happened to be most familiar to myself.

It will be of assistance to any reader to have at hand the *Hellenic Civilization* of Botsford and Sihler, an excellent and very convenient compilation of extracts from the source

<sup>1</sup> Cf. this from Professor Shotwell's *History of History*: 'History is more than events. It is the manifestation of life, and behind each event is some effort of mind and will, while within each circumstance exists some power to stimulate or obstruct.'

material. Quite as valuable — more so to philosophic minds — is Cornford's book of selections illustrating *Greek Religious Thought* published by J. M. Dent and Sons. Many parts of my story that are unavoidably brief will be found clearly told at greater detail in the histories of Breasted, Bury, Botsford and Ferguson and in the fascinating volumes of the *Cambridge Ancient History*. These books contain also bibliographies which will point the way to further reading and which make another one quite unnecessary. Now and then, indeed, it has seemed advisable to suggest specific references in footnotes, but these are solely to easily available books in English. And it must be remembered that no reading of modern books, however good, will take the place of some first-hand contact with the Greek mind and the way it expressed itself. Everyone ought to read the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the first book of Herodotus, the first two books of Thucydides, the *Agamemnon* of Æschylus, the *Antigone* or the *Oedipus Rex* of Sophocles, the *Phædo* and the *Republic* of Plato. He who reads these has entered one of the richest treasure-houses in the world and is unlikely to stop at the entrance.

My debts are innumerable and most of them are untraceable. There are three, however, that I must gratefully acknowledge. To Professor W. S. Ferguson and Professor A. D. Nock, of Harvard University, I owe suggestions and constructive criticisms that helped me to avoid some serious misstatements and misjudgments. For my use of those suggestions they are not responsible in the least, and they may receive my final report with fierce disapproval, but they pointed the way to many quite vital things that I should certainly have overlooked without their friendly aid. And

to my wife I owe, not only indispensable assistance in the proof-reading, but the verifying of references and the correcting of countless obscurities and rough spots as she went along. For all of which I give heartfelt thanks. A desert island, even with an ample library, would be, after all, a poor place for work.

C. F. L.

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# A BIOGRAPHY OF THE GREEK PEOPLE

## CHAPTER I

### *The Heroic Age*

**I**N THE beginning there was Chaos, ‘without form and void,’ then Earth and Heaven. From these were born (no one knows how — and why should one ask futile questions?) giants and gods and monsters of all kinds. Kronos was the greatest of these until he was overthrown by his son Zeus, who then became King of Heaven, ruling all things from his seat in high Olympus, so far, at any rate, as Fate allowed, for Fate was even stronger than Zeus. And so much for the beginning.

Zeus did not make the world. It was there long before he was born in Crete. But according to the poet Hesiod, who no doubt knew as much about it as anyone, he did make man with the assistance of the craftsman god Hephaistos, who also fashioned the first woman under specific instructions from the King of Heaven. Man was created, however, not once for all as the Hebrew account has it, but in a series of experiments — these experiments constituting the five ages of human history, the golden age, the silver age, the bronze age, the age of heroes, and the last one, the age of iron in which we live. Very possibly these may have overlapped. Just as some of us wonder whether there may not be in our

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veins the blood of Neanderthal man or even *Pithecanthropus erectus*, so Hesiod's five ages may have had some sort of continuity. But this was and is a matter of small importance. The five ages will do very well without vain inquisition.

Of the first three of these 'cycles' there is no record. But of the heroic age, when men and gods were on such intimate terms that they intermarried, so that practically all of the heroes had divine blood in their veins, there are memories preserved by the poets. These memories are naturally a little confused and lacking in sequence, but some of the heroes stand out quite clearly both in personality and exploits, like Heracles and Perseus and Jason and Bellerophon and Minos, and those who a little later took part in the great expedition against Troy. From these sprang not, one supposes, the whole human race; peoples like the Ethiopians and the Persians must account for their own origin; but certainly the Greeks. At least some of them, though the divine descent is not so clear as it might be in this unhappy iron age, when the gods no longer appear to mortals in the friendly and companionable way they once did.

### I

Now such an introduction to any account of the Greeks would have seemed fairly reasonable and adequate to a sixth-century Athenian. A century later it might have been smiled at by some as naïve and uncritical, but the smile would have been a tolerant one, implying no urge to look into the matter and correct it. We find this annoying and incomprehensible, but we must remember that, while the contemporaries and successors of Socrates were as curious as we are, they were not curious in quite the same way or about the same things.

They had some historical feeling, but it was not exacting and not at all like ours. Poetry and legend served their purpose very well. No Greek ever dreamed that a time would come when descendants of the peoples called vaguely Hyperboreans<sup>1</sup> — those who lived ‘at the back of the north wind’ — would be eager to know far more than the poets told and would try to bridge with facts the great gulf between the beginning of things — whatever that may mean — and the living present. And if they had dreamed of it they would have considered such inquisitiveness foolish or even unwholesome.

Who then were these people who were so careless about preserving exact information about their ancestors? We call them Greeks, but they called themselves Hellenes and their land Hellas. Hellas was not, however, the name of a specified territory, distinctly bounded by frontiers in the modern fashion. It was hardly a geographical name at all. Wherever there were Hellenes, there was Hellas. Our traditional association of the name Greece with one peninsula is just as misleading as it would be to limit the adjective British to those who live in England. Most of the brilliant names in the Hellenic record, except for about a hundred years,<sup>2</sup> belonged to men who lived in the islands or in Asia or — in later days — Egypt. So if we make a map to clear up the course of our story, Hellas means the sea and coast-line from the Adriatic to the Hellespont, from the Hellespont to the Nile, with a projection westward to South Italy — including, of course, the islands from Sicily to Cyprus. And the Hellenes, differing as much as Americans do in gifts and temperament, lived in compact little city-states all over that area, bound

<sup>1</sup> *Hyper*, beyond; *Boreas*, the north wind.

<sup>2</sup> The great age of Athens, roughly 500–400 B.C.

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together, not definitely and firmly by a common government, but vaguely by a common language — with many dialects — a tradition of common descent, a more or less common religion, and a common interest in athletics and poetry. For the most part they were no more united in political feeling than the nations of modern Europe. And this was true from the earliest times of which we have record down to their conquest by Rome.

That expression — ‘earliest times’ — is vague, and it has to be. If anyone insists that we ought to begin the story of the Hellenes at the real beginning, refusing to be satisfied with Hesiod’s account of the ‘five ages,’ he will have to be told, regretfully, that no one knows where they came from or how they got to where we find them. We call them Europeans, akin to the Italians and Germans of later ages rather than to the Arabs or the Chinese. But to say that all Europeans — even all Greeks — have a common origin, much more to locate and define that origin, is to become involved at once in endless and relatively unprofitable disputations. Unprofitable because even if the question could be settled it would enlighten us very little as regards Hellenic civilization. As much and as little, perhaps, as research into Shakespere’s ancestry would help us to understand Hamlet.

Greek history does not, in fact, begin with the Greeks in any racial sense. It begins rather with the world into which they dropped when they came from the north or east as rude barbarians, clan by clan and tribe by tribe, to wander and settle all over the *Ægean* lands. Or more precisely it begins with their arrival. For when the Achaians — vanguard of the Hellenes — reached the shores of the Mediterranean, they found there a vigorous group of peoples who had al-

ready gone far in solving the problems of social, industrial, and intellectual life.<sup>1</sup> The Hellenic civilization as it developed was not, of course, modeled on those of Egypt and Phoenicia and Crete: the plant does not model itself on the soil that makes the seed germinate and grow any more than the soil can determine whether the seed will turn out to be a maple tree or a carrot. It is inconceivable that the Hellenes would have become Hellenes if they had settled on the shores of the Baltic, even if it is equally unlikely that the stimulating world of the eastern Mediterranean could have made Hellenes out of Hottentots. But however we express it in biological or social terms, the Greeks found their first teachers in the traders and travelers of western Asia and northeastern Africa whose busy ships traversed the waters between Italy and Tyre. And they must have learned even more from the people whose cities they occupied or destroyed as they advanced.

About these wild, early days we have a curious combination of vivid knowledge and bewildering ignorance. The Greeks of the great age, as has been already remarked, were singularly lacking in our passion for accurate information about remote things. And yet they were immensely interested in the primitive age of their race, more interested than we are in ours. To determine by scientific investigation precisely what took place a thousand years before never occurred to them. But they delighted in keeping alive all kinds of traditions and playing with them in a creative and imaginative way, retelling old stories, changing details whenever they felt inclined, weaving them into their songs and their dramas,

<sup>1</sup> See the first eight chapters of Breasted's *Ancient Times* and the first two chapters of Botsford's *Hellenic History*.

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their vase-painting and their sculptures, even their philosophy. Now on many points the rich treasures uncovered by modern archeologists illustrate these old stories and prove a substratum of actual fact in them. And this comforts us greatly. We are trained nowadays to look severely on invented history, no matter how agreeable. It may be our form of superstition, as a German philosopher has suggested, but we like to feel that at least some of the events narrated did occur.

And no doubt some of them did. But the very expression — ‘actual fact’ — illustrates the difference between the Greek mind and ours. With all the eager curiosity and sharp intelligence of Athenian and Alexandrian thinkers the buried cities of the distant past remained unexplored for century after century. The story of Agamemnon, of his brilliant career and tragic death, they knew as well as an Englishman knows King Alfred and the cakes or an American knows George Washington and the cherry tree, and they reflected about it seriously. But the enthusiasm of Dr. Schliemann when he announced in 1876 that he had discovered the veritable body of Agamemnon, buried with all the panoply of royal splendor in the ruins of his city, would have stirred no thrill in the heart of Pericles or Socrates. That he had lived and had had a dramatic share in great matters was certain. But why this excitement about his skeleton? An enterprising Frenchman<sup>1</sup> has tried to verify the exact route followed by Odysseus in his return from Troy to Ithaka. Thus the adventure with Polyphemus took place apparently on the Italian shore just north of Naples. But why so much effort when the whole story is told clearly in the *Odyssey*? It is a question

<sup>1</sup> Victor Bérard, *\*Les Phéniciens et l'Odyssée.*

of difference in mental attitude. The Greek notion of a fact was based on interest and human value, ours on what a camera would have shown if it had been snapped at a propitious moment.

It almost seems a case in which the strict truth would be automatically untrue, which is not uncommon but is disconcerting. Evidently some mental adjustment is called for. We cannot deliberately accept fable as fact and surrender our wish to know what did actually happen, yet we cannot entirely throw away the fable. But the problem is stimulating rather than hopeless. We need to throw away nothing that is genuine, and we know that myth often gives us a priceless clue to energies and motives and all the dynamic intangibles that make history a living record. But because we are what we are we want first to get such skeletal structure as our evidence permits. And if we diligently put together the findings of archeology, the picturesque if confusing mass of legend, and a few sentences from Herodotus and Thucydides,<sup>1</sup> we can make an outline that is useful and is certainly true within its woefully inadequate limits.

## II

First, then, and as far back as we can go — say, from 3000 B.C. to about 1500 B.C. — there was a fairly common type of civilization all over the *Ægean* lands, held together loosely or otherwise in an empire and nowadays given the name Minoan. Then came newcomers — the Greeks, as we call

<sup>1</sup> Two historians of the fifth century who wrote accounts of contemporary events, but did find it relevant to make a few statements about the distant past. Thucydides (I, c. 1-4) even gave a useful little summary of ancient Greek history. How much he really knew about it we have no way of finding out. <sup>“?”</sup>

them — Achaians, Æolians, Ionians, and Dorians — whose arrival, coinciding with the collapse of the empire, began a long period of division and confusion that lasted roughly from about 1500 B.C. to 1100 or 1000 B.C., though this interval between two civilizations can hardly be dated even approximately. Then, slowly, came the rise of settled communities, cities like Sparta and Athens and countless others, and the taking shape of a new culture quite unlike that which had preceded it. This makes three clearly marked periods — the Cretan or Minoan, the Achaian or Mycenæan, and the Hellenic, a terminology which we are making less precise than the experts do but which will serve our purpose. The first two of these, practically indistinguishable in Greek tradition, cover Hesiod's 'Age of the Heroes.'

It seems, then, that our story should begin with the Minoan Empire. But the Minoan Empire we know only through its ruined shell: it is what a devastated New York or London or Rome would be if all records were destroyed, the monuments only monuments, without any of the human elements of passion and purpose that would animate the dead things and translate them into an epic. Yet we do have facts, facts of a certainty above all chronicles. Ruined castles and frescoed walls, vases and tablets, swords and carved jewels, bear incontrovertible witness to a great sea-power that had its center in Crete and extended its sway over all the islands and coasts of the later Hellas.<sup>1</sup> Ages before Socrates, ages before David and Solomon, ages before the rise of Nineveh, when Egypt was at the height of her glory, the first chapter

<sup>1</sup> See Baikie, *The Sea-Kings of Crete*, and Hawes, *Crete, The Forerunner of Greece*. Botsford, *Hellenic History*, chapter 2, is perhaps the best short account of Minoan civilization. It is only a summary, but a good one, with adequate references for further inquiry.

in the history of Europe was being written, a sequel or companion to that which was written in the valleys of the Nile and the Euphrates. It belongs to the history of the Greeks only as the story of Rome and Roman Britain belongs to the history of England. If we could see the Greek lands as they were about, say, 2000 B.C., the picture would show no Greeks, no buildings or sculptures or language or customs that were in the least like the Greek. But it would show a busy, cultivated, intelligent people, merchants, sailors, fighters, sportsmen, potters, painters, scribes, architects, skilled artists in bronze and gold, workers and idlers of all kinds — civilized men and women, in short — scattered over the sea in swift ships and over the islands and main lands in walled cities. We cannot tell about them any of the things that a modern historian loves, for all written records have perished or are unreadable. But for the archeologist — and the dreamer — the Minoan civilization is the most fascinating hunting ground in the world.

The name of one great king, Minos,<sup>1</sup> survived in tradition, and that is why we call this age of Cretan power and culture Minoan. Minos himself may indeed be a myth, to be classed

<sup>1</sup> 'There is a land called Crete in the midst of the wine-dark sea, a fair land and a rich, begirt with water, and therein are many men innumerable, and ninety cities... And among these cities is the mighty city Cnossus, wherein Minos when he was nine years old began to rule, he who held converse with great Zeus.' (*Odyssey*, xix, lines 170 ff. Butcher and Lang, trans.) 'Minos,' says Thucydides, 'is the first to whom tradition ascribes the possession of a navy. He made himself master of a great part of what is now termed the Hellenic Sea, conquered the Cyclades, and was the first colonizer of most of them.'

The story of the liberation of Athens from Cretan domination may be read most agreeably in Plutarch's *Theseus*. We do not need to believe it unless we want to, but every Athenian did, which is much more important.

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in our superior modern way with King Arthur and William Tell. But the Minoan Empire was no myth; Cnossus was a real city;<sup>1</sup> and at least we know more about the ‘Minoans’ than the Greeks themselves did. Every Athenian knew about Minos and had heard of his wonder-working engineer Daidalos, who built the Labyrinth and made automatic servants and found out how to fly. Everyone could tell how Theseus penetrated the Labyrinth and killed the Minotaur and won the independence of Athens. But whether Minos was a real person, whether his name was like Cæsar and Pharaoh — a title given to a whole line of rulers — whether his city was destroyed by rebels or rivals or Achaian raiders, the Greeks never cared and we shall probably never know.

Presumably the Cretan Empire ended with the fall of Cnossus. Ended, however, only as the Roman civilization ended with the fall of Rome. The crash of a great institution is always a matter of grave concern and far-reaching consequence, but a civilization never does end with the collapse of its political form unless that collapse means the practical annihilation of a people. It may very well, however, indicate or bring about a radical change, the close of an era, and this much may be said of both Rome and Crete, for in each case there was involved the entry of a new and supremely important element. This was the arrival of formidable barbarians — in the one case the Germans, in the other the Greeks.

For at some unknown date, possibly about 1500 b.c., possibly earlier, there appeared on the Ægean shores the newcomers who were called by their descendants and successors the Achaians, bringing with them the Greek language and the

<sup>1</sup> Described in detail by Sir Arthur Evans, *The Palace of Cnossus* — presumably the palace called by the Greeks the Labyrinth..

radiant gods of Olympus. Bit by bit they spread over Greece, almost certainly mixing with the inhabitants and absorbing whatever they found congenial in the native culture, like the Franks in Gaul, the Goths in Italy, the English in Britain. It may have been at their hands that Cnossus fell, and it may not. At any rate, the center of power shifted from Crete to the mainland, more especially to Mycenæ and Argos, and the empire of Minos gave place to independent and semi-independent Achaian principalities — forerunners of the Greek city-states — that dotted the *Ægean* world from the islands west of the Greek peninsula to the coast of Asia. So for convenience we may say that the Minoan era was succeeded by the Achaian or Mycenæan, the Greek Middle Age.<sup>1</sup> Later generations called it the age of the heroes, and blended the memory of it with still older memories, the deeds of Minoans and Achaians inextricably interwoven. For many centuries the Achaians were as real as the Athenians, the gods as real as the heroes, real even in their faults and their brutalities, only with a kind of glory about them — like Abraham and Jacob to a Jew, or Wallace and Bruce to a Scot, or Charlemagne and Roland to a Frenchman. For us, whether supermen or not, they were the heralds of a new era.

One Achaian tradition is so human, so vivid and positive,

<sup>1</sup> Or Late Minoan, dividing Minoan into I, II, and III. Mr. J. W. Mackail (*Lectures on Greek Poetry*, Introduction) has used the word mediæval for the Achaian age, and it seems suggestive, as describing the age of confusion between the two brilliant periods of the Minoan empire and Hellenic civilization. So that to a Greek who had our modern liking for classification history might be divided into Ancient (Minoan or Cretan), Mediæval (Achaian or Mycenæan) and Modern or Hellenic. Precise dates would be impossible, of course, for the three ages would shade into one another just as our Ancient, Mediæval and Modern do.

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that it is immortal — the war with Troy. It is quite possible to speculate on economic and geographic causes for such a war.<sup>1</sup> Troy dominated the entrance to the Hellespont, the strait that we call the Dardanelles. Now the Hellespont was the one line of communication with the Black Sea, whence the *Æ*gean peoples have from time immemorial drawn a great part of their supply of grain. Troy must have gained her wealth from the tolls of the *Æ*gean merchants, using her commanding position as a mediæval robber baron used a castle overlooking a highroad or a river, and she may have pushed her exactions beyond the point of endurance. But reasonable and interesting as such speculations may be, they are based on no information. The ancient story does not dwell on any such unexciting cause of trouble as the corn supply. The tale runs that a Trojan prince, Paris, who was the guest of Menelaos, king of Sparta, carried off to Troy Helen, the beautiful wife of his host. The indignant Menelaos sought the aid of his powerful brother, Agamemnon, king of Mycenæ, and Agamemnon summoned all the Achaians to join him in a war of vengeance. The war lasted ten years and ended in the fall of Troy.

Thucydides tells us that only eighty years after the destruction of Troy (traditional date 1184 B.C.), the Dorians, another Hellenic people, came down into southern Greece and conquered the Peloponnesus. The date may not be correct, but the thing itself certainly occurred. The supremacy of the Achaians was ended forever. A district in the north of the peninsula perpetuated their name, but Mycenæ was blotted out, and Argos and Sparta became seats of Dorian

<sup>1</sup> See Walter Leaf's illuminating discussion in *Troy: A Study in Homeric Geography*.

power. Nevertheless, the 'Heroic Age' was fated not to die. It was made an inexhaustible treasury for story-tellers and poets and moralists, to be drawn on always and everywhere. Even the conquering Dorians may have had pleasure in tales and songs of the princes that they had supplanted. Rude fighting people as they were, they liked to consider themselves descendants of the pre-Achaian hero Heracles, returning to their ancestral home, eager to share in the glamour of an older time. And at Athens, in the islands, and in Asia Minor, colonized by Greeks along the coast during the generations after the Trojan War, there were kings and warriors subdued by the Dorian spears who boasted descent from the heroes and listened gladly to lays of the Achaians. Many such lays must have come down from the time of Agamemnon himself and others were added from time to time, all singing of the great days of old and ignoring the duller times and petty exploits of the present. And in due season some of these were fused together in the magnificent epics that tell of the wrath of Achilles and the wanderings of Odysseus.

### III

We come, then, to Homer. It is to the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, as everyone knows, that we owe any really living picture of the heroic age. Their historical significance we cannot ignore even if we want to, and very few of us want to. But to appreciate it we must keep in mind two things. In the first place the poems were not contemporary with the events they narrate. The traditional chronology of later times separated Homer from Agamemnon by three hundred years — which still remains a good enough guess — and to expect from the poet exactness of historic fact would be ab-

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surd even if he were a conscientious chronicler and not a minstrel. If fact and truth were the same thing then Homer might indeed be applauded for the music of his verse, but the deeds of his heroes should be taken no more seriously than the adventures of the Red Cross Knight or the White Rabbit or Kenneth Grahame's Mole. There is a sense, however, in which the minstrel is more apt to tell the truth than the chronicler. The inaccuracy that is fatal in the one is instructive in the other. Or rather, both chronicler and minstrel are automatically and inevitably accurate about some things.

Thus if I carefully set it down that the battle of Waterloo was fought in 1789, I am stating that which is not true and can do nothing but mislead. If, however, I am an old soldier of Napoleon, setting down in 1850 my memories of the Emperor and his campaigns, I may be wrong in all my specific facts and yet tell the truth, truth that has value — not the truth about Austerlitz and Waterloo, but the truth about a soldier of the Empire and the way he regarded things. If what is wanted is precisely what occurred at 2 P.M., June 18, 1815, the reminiscences of Soult or the account by Soult's grandson of what the old Marshal had told him may be worse than worthless. If what is wanted is the drift of opinion and belief in nineteenth-century France, the character and power of the Napoleon legend, the living picture of the Empire that had dynamic reality to millions of Frenchmen for generation after generation, then the reconstructed, fanciful, gilded memory may be more true than even the most accurate chronicle — i.e., be of more use in explaining the course of events. What the student of history *would like* is both kinds of evidence, each having its own kind of value. But if he cannot have both kinds, he welcomes what he can get. Only

he must not confuse them. A reminiscence is not to be mistaken for a stenographic report or a photograph. But it may contain elements — quite priceless elements — that the stenographer would never have heard or the film recorded.

It is so with Homer. The poet who was consciously telling of an older age was also and unconsciously reflecting his own, as a Norman poet singing of King Arthur would portray a sixth-century prince and his companions in the guise of twelfth-century knights — only made colossal — and wistfully look back to see wishes realized, griefs wiped out, ideals become facts, in a dream that looked backward instead of forward, its very unreality tied firmly to experience. If the magic of irresponsible fancy opened to him a world not his own, it would still be his own world glorified and remade. Present and past would be inextricably interwoven, involuntary and inevitable truth with luxuriant fiction. Just where Homer embodies a genuine Mycenæan tradition — true or fabulous as the case might be — and where he is reflecting conditions and ideas of the ninth century, we can rarely tell. But this does not destroy his historical value. It means only that we must avoid troubling our minds about dates or insisting on authentic events. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* tell us much that is entirely reliable about the Greeks of the ninth century and beyond, even if not a single episode of the poems occurred as narrated, and even if the matter of date for this or that idea, this or that custom, has to be given up in despair.<sup>1</sup>

In the second place we must remember that the interest of Homer is wholly centered in the Achaian princes and war-

<sup>1</sup> Professor Whitehead (*Adventures of Ideas*, Introduction) makes a precisely similar comment on the historical significance of Gibbon, consciously telling of the Roman Empire, unconsciously telling of his own age and its mental attitude.

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riors, not in the *people* in our modern sense. Interesting and vivid as is the picture, it is a picture from only one angle, tells only part of the story. It is as if a knightly poet of the court of Henry VII had sung the deeds of the crusading ancestors of the King and his nobles, quite ignoring such sordid matters as trade, agriculture, and the crafts. The subjects and atmosphere of Homer are aristocratic and romantic, and we must not suppose that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* give us any complete picture of Achaian Greece.<sup>1</sup>

Here and there we are given glimpses, indeed, that are not of the battlefield and that throw pencil points of light on common men and homely things. Eumæus, the swineherd of Odysseus, is as vividly portrayed as are the heroes themselves. Loyal and noble-hearted, he is the friend of the king as well as his servant, and in their relations there is neither condescension on the one hand nor servility on the other. There is no evidence in the poems of any aristocratic scorn of labor. Odysseus describes with pride how he had fashioned his own bed; Laertes, the father of Odysseus, plows his own fields; Nausicaa, the Phœacian princess, helps her maidens when they go 'a-washing at the breaking of the day,' and joins them in a game of ball when the work is over and the clean linen is drying in the sun; the god Hephaistos is a blacksmith and a skilled worker in metals, and makes with his own hands the great shield of Achilles. And no one would willingly lose the entrancing story of the journey of Telemachus over sea

<sup>1</sup> They can be supplemented, of course, by the *Works and Days* of Hesiod (see below, Chapter II), but 'supplemented' is hardly the right word; the two pictures are of different worlds, even though they existed side by side. And if this is a paradox, it is the fault not of the poets but of life. It could be illustrated as easily in modern America as in ancient Greece.

and hills to Lacedæmon, 'low-lying among the caverned hills,' seeking from Menelaos news of his lost father, the domestic picture of Menelaos and his restored Helen talking peacefully about the old exciting days while their young visitors marvel at the stately hall with its 'flashing of gold and of amber and of silver and of ivory like the court of Olympian Zeus,' or the equally vivid tale of how Odysseus came as a suppliant to the gay and kindly Phœacians, the astonished circle of servants and nobles looking on in impressed silence as the travel-weary hero bowed before the queen. But in the main the poet's interest is in princes and war and wild adventures. We need no more expect the workaday world to appear than in the *Song of Roland* or the *Idylls of the King*.

What about the heroes, then? What does Homer make them believe and value? What was their attitude to kings and gods, for instance — their notion, if they had any, of political and religious freedom, their conception of the divine government of the world? What was their standard of moral excellence? Had they any of the interest in beauty, in physical strength and skill, in intellectual inquiry and reflection that we associate with the Greeks of later days?

First as to the gods — and here a general observation must be made before we look at specific cases. Religious development tends to pass through phases that with infinite variation of detail are yet so uniform among different peoples that they seem to follow what may be called psychological laws. Thus the most marked characteristic of primitive religion is animism — a word necessarily vague but meaning in general the ascribing of intelligence and will to trees, stars, mountains, rivers, anything at all, a sort of universal and unanalyzed belief in 'ghosts.' With this goes by natural consequence

the 'trial-and-error' attitude to life, the formalism, the conservatism, the rigid adherence to prescribed ways of propitiating the terribly powerful, terribly unknown, terribly unknowable Unseen. Taboo, ritual, magic, totemism, nature-worship in all its forms, are all associated with the sense of invisible powers that are uncertain in their location and their attributes.

Uncertain, that is to say, unless one knows the rules, and the rules are available through tradition and experts — wizards, medicine-men, soothsayers, priests. Whether these are intelligent or unintelligent is of no consequence; such words have no meaning even to us when we are faced with problems of whose character and elements we are totally ignorant; the wisest of judges may resort to trial and error or turn with relief to an expert when he is confronted with an ill-behaved motor-boat or automobile. And to primitive man every aspect of life presented just such problems. Barley is just as good a grain as sesame; but 'open barley' would not open the door of Ali Baba's cave whereas 'open sesame' would. Intelligence does not come into the situation at all. Now the advance on this comes gradually with the first realization of *order* in the processes of nature, the first effort to observe the *reason* for failure or success after trial, the first daring attempt to substitute reflection and experiment for ritual, the first dawn of a notion that the invisible powers of life are not altogether arbitrary but are moved by intelligence and passion like our own. So there comes anthropomorphism and gods who are like men.

Homer's religion has reached this stage. There are plenty of signs of ritual, magic, and animism in the epics; but these are overwhelmingly subordinated to the conviction that the

gods are supermen, with our faults, our virtues, our motives, our passions, but on a larger, more swaggering scale. The gods cannot — as a rule — be seen; they dwell on Mount Olympus; but they are far-ranging and adventurous, apt to appear anywhere; they vary in power but are all more powerful than we are; and since on the whole life was pleasant and friendly it might be supposed that the gods were normally amiable and shared in general — but not too consistently — our notions of good and evil, right and wrong, reward and punishment. In power and glory far above men, in morals behaving like men, they represent a religion essentially freed from the crude fetishism, the unintelligent ritual, the abject fear, the ignorant or hysterical cruelty of the primitive. And whatever ancient worships and sacrifices and monstrous myths survived throughout Greece from the Minoan age, the Olympians, with all their faults, were beings of the sunlight and the upper air, an influence toward freedom, joy, and fearlessness.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For convenience of reference we may remind those who have forgotten their gods that Zeus was the lord of Heaven, Poseidon of earth and sea, and Pluto of Hades, these three having supplanted their father Kronos (Saturn); that Apollo and the wise goddess Athena stood next in power; ~~and~~ that such divinities as Hera, wife of Zeus, Ares, god of war, Artemis the huntress, Aphrodite, goddess of love, Hermes the Messenger, and Hephaistos (Vulcan) the heavenly craftsman, stood a little lower among the dwellers on high Olympus. Dionysus and Demeter, presiding over the vine and the fruits of the earth, were probably not Achaian deities and did not interest Homer. Below these were an infinite host of lesser divinities and demigods, often more interesting to the ordinary Greek than were the Olympians, but still not quite in their class. To know these gods is quite essential to a knowledge of Greek literature, art, and thought, but the Olympian theology is of course only a phase of Greek religion, by no means all of it. See Fairbanks, *Handbook of Greek Religion*, Miss Jane Harrison's *Prolegomena*, and Gilbert Murray's *Four Stages of Greek Religion* for a more comprehensive survey and discussion.

There is one element in the religion of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, however, one not easy to define, to which these remarks do not apply. Among the unseen powers of the world was *Moira*, Fate, and Fate was not a god but a fact, mysterious, tremendous, overruling men, constraining even the gods, not like the Quiet of Browning's Caliban, but like an all-pervasive Law beyond prayer and beyond sacrifices, impersonal and inexorable. This sounds like the later conception of infinite physical and moral order, of a Cosmos that underlies and might make intelligible the confusion and waywardness of men and gods alike. But Homer never reduced it to a rational conviction, a doctrine, a consistent formula as later thinkers did. Zeus could, if he wished, avert the strokes of Fate. Poseidon warns *Aeneas* not to venture too far lest even contrary to his Fate he enter the house of Hades. But Zeus is warned by Hera that if he should save his son from the doom of Fate he will merit the reproach of all the gods; nor does he disregard her, but sheds bloody raindrops on the earth in his unavailing grief. 'Methinks there is nothing more piteous than man among all things that breathe and creep upon the earth!' meditated the son of Kronos as he pondered on man's helplessness.

For the scorning of Fate brought Nemesis, which is something like our reflection that if we defy a law of nature we do not break it: it breaks us. Nemesis, that is to say, was not exactly a punishment: it was the certain consequence of the defying of Fate, the destruction that follows pride. Reverence, *aidōs*, was much safer. *Aidōs* and *sophrosune* (moderation) might not avert calamity, but *hubris* (pride, arrogance, insolence) invited it. Yet sometimes the very inexorableness of Fate — like Divine Providence to a Cal-

vinist — could be a sort of grim comfort. ‘Dear one,’ said Hector to his wife, ‘I pray thee be not of a sorrowful heart; no man against my fate shall hurl me to Hades; only destiny, I ween, no man has escaped, be he coward or valiant, when once he hath been born.’ So with all the confused notions of it, we may perhaps see in Homer’s Fate a sort of symbol of the terrible serenity, the unbending reliability that lay behind the shifting phenomena of life.<sup>1</sup>

Whatever else is true about the Homeric religion, one feature of it is outstanding: it is an accurate reflection of life as the heroes saw it. To them life was a gamble, but not altogether a gamble. There were, in other words, two striking facts about the world, the invariable and the variable, the things no man may avoid and the things that happen in different and unexpected ways. Man himself is variable, whimsical, free and independent, in a world that is also variable — but *in a world also of some absolute certainties*. Fate stands for the invariable and inevitable: the gods for the freedom and changeableness that men who were themselves free and changeable could see everywhere and understand. The doings of the Homeric gods that dismay and scandalize us were exactly the things that the heroes themselves did all the time. Among gods and heroes alike variableness was the obvious sign of freedom and power, the very essence of being alive. The rivalries, preferences, angers, and friendships of the gods were those of men and were expressed in human ways. And since they were perennially interested in the affairs of mortals, men might expect the interventions

<sup>1</sup> See the discussion of Fate and Nemesis in Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy*, and of *aidōs* in Gilbert Murray, *Rise of the Greek Epic* (3d ed.), 81–91.

of gods and — as with a powerful human neighbor — could only hope for the best. Moreover, since the gods had their own discords and preferences, the dangers and humiliations sent by one might be averted by the aid of another. When Apollo dashed the whip from the hand of Diomedes in the chariot race, it was restored to him by Athena. Poseidon continually pursued Odysseus with calamities and Athena as constantly aided and comforted him. Such a régime had a picturesqueness and fascination all its own, the fascination of a game of chance. It reminds one a little of the way the mediæval man regarded saints and devils, except that to the Greek the same Being might be a savior to one man and a bane to another. The gods were powerful friends, deadly enemies, and never to be counted on — not unlike the Greeks themselves throughout their entire history.

This divine uncertainty and irresponsibility might seem to a devout Hebrew or Christian merely blasphemous, the negation of religion. But our demand that deity shall imply moral perfection would have been to the heroes unintelligible and irrelevant. The real problem lay in knowing what the gods would do, in winning their friendship, in averting their anger, not in speculating about their morals. It was, indeed, quite impossible to predict their actions with any certainty, or to be at all sure of what would please them. But it was worth while to try. ‘Their hearts by incense and reverent vows and drink-offering men turn with prayer’ Phoenix reminds Achilles, and this was held so firmly that no right-minded man neglected his sacrifices. Omens and oracles might be helpful, too, as a means of ascertaining the divine will. Reliance on such authorities, using the flight of birds, the entrails of sacrificial victims, and all other means known to soothsayers was

universal, although one cannot forget Hector's magnificent protest against their blind use in the face of manifest duty. 'Thou biddest us,' he cried scornfully to Polydamas, 'Thou biddest us be obedient to birds long of wing, whereto I give no heed, whether they fare to the right, to the dawn and to the sun, or to the left, to mist and darkness. Nay, for us, let us trust to the counsel of mighty Zeus, who is king over all mortals and immortals. One omen is best, to fight for our country.' But of course this attitude of high faith in divine righteousness is rare. It is merely one of the gleams of light, one of the moments of impatient intuition, of half escape from customary standards, that illustrate Homer's unreflective but significant mental freedom.

Evidently, then, the men of Homer looked at the Olympians, even at Fate, with directness, fearlessness, and composure. And the same spiritual independence, the same emancipation from real fear, is characteristic of the attitude of the heroes toward the kings. That is to say, it is a question of the way they bore themselves toward their superiors in rank and strength, the way they regarded gods and kings and traditional restraints of whatever kind. And in this Homer's evidence is clear. The king, in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, is never absolute in power. He is the leader in war, the chief judge, and the chief priest. His orders direct the battle, his dooms settle disputes, his hand performs the sacrifices. Aiding, advising, often controlling him are the clan chiefs, the nobles, and these constitute a permanent council. They are in fact little less important than the kings themselves, and among their own folk they are kings. Our language makes the distinction between an Agamemnon and an Achilles much sharper than any that Homer saw, for

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we insensibly add to our conception of kingship the tradition of feudalism added to the Oriental idea conveyed in our phrase ‘the Lord’s anointed’ and interpreted in terms of Roman law. No such tradition is visible in Homer. Agamemnon was only the first among equals, and each chief at home was likewise the first among equals. Odysseus before Troy was a lesser king, subject, in a measure, to the authority of one greater than himself. But at home in Ithaka he was, so to speak, chief king over many lesser ones, and the same word, *basileus*, could be used for all. The analogy of the older Scotland or of mediæval Germany illustrates the situation, though such parallels must not be pushed too far. Below all these ‘heroes’ were, of course, the people, whose duty it was to work, to follow, and to obey. Curiously enough, the picture of a judgment on the shield of Achilles shows no king — only the chiefs and the people.

But the folk were gathered in the assembly place; for there a strife was arisen, two men striving about the blood-price of a man slain; the one claimed to pay full atonement, expounding to the people, but the other denied him and would take nought; and both were fain to receive arbitrament at the hands of a daysman. And the folk were cheering both, as they took part on either side. And heralds kept order among the folk, while the elders on polished stones were sitting in the sacred circle and holding in their hands staves from the loud-voiced heralds. Then before the people they rose and gave judgment each in turn.

That is to say, Homer shows a collapse of primitive clan despotism on earth, and with all due regard to the supremacy of Zeus he paints a very doubtful despotism in Heaven. There are kings and there are gods, but both permit liberties that

would have shocked Egypt or Babylon or Israel — or Louis XIV. In ‘political’ relations as in religion the prevailing note is not obedience, reverence, rigidity, regard for law, but freedom, independence of thought and speech, elasticity. Achilles’ angry defiance of Agamemnon (‘Thou heavy with wine, thou with face of dog and heart of deer ——’), the stern reproofs to the king uttered in council by Diomedes and Odysseus (‘man of mischief, sure thou shouldst lead some other inglorious army, not be king among us!’ ‘The son of crooked-counselling Kronos hath endowed thee but by halves: he granted thee to have the honor of the scepter above all men, but valor he gave thee not, wherein is highest power’), the fierce reproaches that Achilles hurled at Apollo himself when the god deceived him (‘Thou hast balked me, Far-darter, most mischievous of all the gods. — Verily I would avenge me on thee had I but the power’) all indicate the same movement of the spirit toward fearlessness in the face of authority, impatience of restraint. It is worth noting, too, that Agamemnon accepted such a reproof as that of Odysseus with a quite unruffled expression of willingness to believe himself wrong. So Apollo hears the imprecations of Achilles without a frown, and if Ares does complain to Zeus when he is wounded by Diomedes, his complaint is sternly dismissed by the Lord of Heaven.

Such an attitude, to our socialized, legalized, institutionalized age, may be thought to come perilously near to lawlessness. Religion and government seem to have the breezy informality of a people for whom conventions of theology, ritual, and politics hardly exist. But if we have that impression it may be partly because their conventions were not ours. The heroes did have certain forms, albeit elastic, both

for their worship and for the regulation of social affairs. And the simplicity of those forms, their vitality and easy variability, is natural enough if we realize three things, all strikingly in contrast alike with Asia and with later Europe. In the first place there was no high and remote majesty of either gods or kings that seemed to require mediators. There was no sacerdotalism because there was no Church and no priesthood. In the second place, religion and ordinary life were divided by no hard-and-fast line. There was no distinction between sacred and secular. In the third place sins and crimes were for all practical purposes identified and reduced to a minimum.

So the moral law was for Homer a very simple one. No sins anger the gods but wanton neglect, breach of faith, and insolence. In other words, sin is virtually limited to arrogant refusal to recognize the rights of others. Gods and kings will not be unreasonable or exacting, but there is a line that must not be passed. The passing of it is *hubris*, the unpardonable sin of pride. Any man may address his petitions direct to the god from whom he seeks help or whose possible anger he may wish to appease. Any man may seek justice from the king. But in neither case is it well to be insulting: the petitioner must remember his manners and must keep faith. These are all the laws, and they are laws for both gods and men.

Within these far from oppressive limits the Homeric Greeks were decidedly and aggressively individuals, as their descendants were. Now individualism is not necessarily inconsistent with social virtues. As one of the greatest of Greek thinkers was to point out, individualism can be stimulated and developed only when man recognizes that he is a social animal. Nevertheless, there is always a potential opposition

between spiritual and ethical freedom and conventionally fixed rules. The heroes were hardly, one would say, anarchs; and yet it is with some misgivings that we try to find whether they had any real standards of goodness, any stable principles that would govern their conduct and their attitude to one another. It is a difficult inquiry, for our inheritance from Israel and Rome has given us a view of goodness that would have puzzled any Greek and would have been totally unintelligible to Homer. The gulf is a hard one to bridge, but it may be illuminating to make the attempt. What, for instance, did the heroes admire most?

Valor and physical efficiency come first, of course. Achilles is brave, strong and fleet of foot beyond all men, and so is first among the heroes before Troy. But Odysseus, second only to Achilles in the *Iliad* and himself the hero of the *Odyssey*, is primarily a man of many wiles, of pre-eminent wisdom and eloquence. ‘When he uttered his great voice from his chest, and words like unto the snowflakes of winter, then could no mortal man contend with Odysseus.’ He too is fleet-footed and brave, an archer inferior to Philoctetes alone, a mighty thrower of the discus, and an invincible wrestler. But his outstanding qualities, even beyond his eloquence, are the insatiable curiosity which carries him into innumerable perils and the ever-ready resourcefulness which brings him safely home at last to Ithaka. These are real types, and it is not hard to sum up the things that were most highly regarded by the Greeks as Homer painted them: physical strength and skill, not only in war but in the friendly competition of the games, readiness of wit, practical wisdom, and eloquence. Thus Achilles’ old tutor Phoenix reminds the hero of his lessons: ‘To thee did the old knight Peleus send

me the day he sent thee to Agamemnon forth from Phthia,  
a stripling yet unskilled in equal war and debate wherein  
men wax pre-eminent. Therefore sent he me to teach thee  
all these things, to be both a speaker of words and a doer  
of deeds.'

But if wit and eloquence on the one hand and courage, strength, and skill on the other represent the characteristic virtues of Homer, it is singularly difficult to see in the words and deeds of the heroes any very consistent standards of conduct other than the pure and simple expediency of the moment. One could not ignore *aidōs* and nemesis, of course — the advisability of reverence, the self-punishment of recklessness — but every man had to interpret and apply these for himself. There were no rules. Even the primitive virtue of warlike valor was easy in its demands, not insisted upon. Constant as was the courage of Achilles, valiant as were Odysseus, Ajax, and Diomedes, yet in this point of unflinching bravery few of their companions or enemies have so good a record. Even Hector, before his last fight with Achilles, fled before his foe in sheer panic, and turned at last only when he found escape impossible. Ares himself, Ares 'insatiate of battle,' bellowed and withdrew ignominiously from the field when he felt the spear of Diomedes. As the Greeks climbed into the wooden horse for the execution of the final stratagem that ended the siege of Troy, the tears flowed down their cheeks and their knees trembled. Yet it is no less true that they did not draw back, and the praise of Neoptolemus by Odysseus as the one whose cheeks did not pale, the pleasure of Achilles in Hades at this praise of his son, show that if the Homeric warrior showed fear with curiously little shame, he readily admired the firmer courage of an Odysseus or a Neop-

tolemus. His pallid cheeks, his tears and grovelings, his trembling, his panic flights were in a sense only a phase of that spontaneity, that quick, naïve, unrestrained expression of thought and emotion which are characteristic of the men of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* throughout.

When we think of the standard of courage in Homer as being doubtful, we mean, then, not that it does not exist, but that it is not quite ours, that the laxity with which public opinion views conformity of nonconformity with that standard shows a lack of clear, positive conviction about it. And a similar inconsistency, laxity, indifference appears in regard to such a virtue as truth-telling. ‘Hateful to me even as the gates of Hell is he that hideth one thing in his heart and uttereth another.’ So spoke Achilles. When Pandarus the Trojan broke the truce — by the instigation of a goddess, be it noted — and the Achaians armed themselves to renew the fight, Agamemnon urged them to battle with the cry, ‘Father Zeus will be no helper of liars.’ Yet not long before Zeus had sent a lying dream to Agamemnon. His testimony to the veracity of the King of Heaven might be balanced by the vehement utterance of Asios when he groaned and smote both his thighs and indignantly exclaimed: ‘Father Zeus, verily thou too dost greatly love a lie!’ Hera, desiring to deceive her lord, lied both to him and to Aphrodite. When Odysseus lied to Athena, not knowing the goddess in her disguise, she smiled with admiring amusement, revealed herself, and bade him cease from inventing tales for her, ‘being both of us practised in deceipts.’

Nor are the other virtues — as we understand them — any more consistently regarded than that of honesty. Mercy is practically unknown in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. There

is moderation and there is sportsmanship, sometimes quite notably present, sometimes just as notably absent. Justice is seen only in such acts as the punishment of the suitors, and in the doubtful form of the gods' willingness to punish pride, defiance, breach of faith, or disobedience. Murder and theft, piracy and kidnaping are, of course, mere commonplaces, regarded with indifference by both men and gods except when — as in the case of Paris and Helen — it involved a breach of hospitality, or when in the case of Chryseis it was more or less a personal matter with Apollo. There is no real moral principle about it. It is in fact hard to avoid the conclusion that the ethical attitude of the poet and presumably of the society that he interpreted was as variable and as devoid of stable form or reflection as that of an ill-disciplined but otherwise normal boy of ten. Turbulent, impulsive, impatient of opposition or control, regarding the gods themselves as little less arbitrary than the north wind or the rain, the heroes were almost wholly without any sense of law.

But the word 'almost' is required, nevertheless, to make the last statement a true one. Adherence to the truth, for instance, may be a virtue often ignored, but it is a virtue. When Agamemnon cries that Zeus will be no helper of liars, he means to assert what is good. When Asios states that Zeus doth greatly love a lie, he means it as a reproach. Gods and men may be inconsistent, there may be lacking a clearly understood standard, formulated, sanctioned, consciously accepted as binding, but a standard is there and is clearly, if casually, recognized as such. Rare as was magnanimity, cruel, brutal, and careless as the heroes and their gods undoubtedly were, yet there is something significant in the words of Odysseus to his old nurse as he reproves her for her exulta-

tion over the death of the suitors: 'Now these hath the destiny of the gods overcome, and their own cruel deeds, for they honored none of earthly men whether the good nor yet the bad that came among them. Wherefore they have met a shameful death through their own infatuate deeds,' and in the cry of Laertes: 'Father Zeus, verily ye gods yet bear sway on high Olympus, if indeed the wooers have paid for their infatuate pride.' Right and wrong are not standardized, but neither are they ignored. Moreover, arbitrary and immoral as the gods may be, they do in the long run punish the guilty and reward the virtuous. Dimly, no doubt, but quite unquestionably there is a religious sanction for right action, a forecast of the coming together of Fate and Zeus, personalizing the one conception and purifying the other. It would be absurd to read *Aeschylus* and *Plato* and *Cleanthes* into Homer — as absurd as reading the fruit into the seed. Yet not so absurd either, so long as we do not confuse them.

To sum up, then, the heroes of Homer were free, alert, spontaneous, and unreflective, with an open admiration for strength, beauty, courage, practical wisdom, eloquence, and — more vaguely — good faith, hospitality, loyalty, and moderation. They were governed no doubt by a certain code of customary morality, as all men are, but it was a customary morality seriously modified by a restless individualism perhaps because they were migrants, as Europeans drop many of their inherited restraints when they become Americans, South Africans, or Australians. At any rate, there was hardly a single principle of conduct that might not be broken with impunity so far as public opinion was concerned. And if there was little or no dictation in regard to morals on the part of the community, no sanction other than a lax and casual public opinion had yet

arisen, no sanction of religion or reflection that could adequately control and guide individual action. The whole matter was in transition. A certain groping for some satisfactory principle that would explain the mystery of good and evil, right and wrong, appears here and there, but it lacks positiveness. ‘What could I do?’ ruefully observes Agamemnon as he considers his treatment of Achilles. ‘It is God who accomplisheth all.’ ‘Blinded was I; Zeus deprived me of my wits.’ Yet that this saddling of blame for wrong on divine sovereignty was no final Homeric philosophy is evident from the comment of Zeus on the crime of *Aegisthus*: ‘Lo, you now, how vainly mortals do blame the gods. For of us, they say, comes evil, whereas they, even of themselves, through the blindness of their own hearts, have sorrows beyond that which is ordained.’

Now let us add to this a consideration that is less obvious but is deeply significant — that in this whole matter the Homeric heroes are at a parting of the ways. Little as they tend to generalize, hazy as were their standards, they have yet reached a point at which reflection, deliberate and conscious, may begin, so to speak, at any moment. It is true that when Homer touches the tragedies and mysteries of sin, suffering, parting, and death, the puzzles and tangles of life, there is little rebellion, little attempt at explanation, or justification, little inclination to view the thing as a problem requiring solution. To Homer his crude and terrible but familiar and often friendly theology is to be accepted with as little questioning as the facts of nature, and if pain and bereavement awaken anguish as real and bitter as with us, yet the cry of agony is blind, as with a child, and the meditations it brings are of the simplest. ‘Surely I must be hated of Father

Zeus,' wails Lykaon as he is about to fall under the spear of Achilles, and his enemy's only comfort is — 'Ay, friend, thou too must die, why lamentest thou? Patroclus too is dead, who was better far than thou... and over me too hangs death and forceful fate.' Destiny and the love and hatred of the gods — against these no man may strive, and their working no man may explain.

Yet this helplessness the heroes faced with puzzled ruminations, with angry complaints, with philosophic acceptance, rather than with either dumb submission or the savage efforts at propitiation that one finds so often among primitive peoples. For even in this earliest revelation of their mental attitude that we possess, the Greeks were no longer primitive, their superstitions no longer taken too seriously. One cannot help feeling that Odysseus and his companions were just on the edge of deeper questioning, that with the growth of more stable conditions of life their minds were already capable of facing the ultimate issues of existence and conduct. But not yet. Homer's heroes are indeed never stupid. They are simply practical men, glorying in freedom and in action, intensely and joyously busied with the problems immediately before them. They are alive, fearless, and free-minded, and they face the world unchained by gods or men — a new phenomenon in the history of the human race. The ideal of righteousness, of divine order, they see in occasional flashes; the sin of insolence and recklessness they see with tolerable clearness; the intoxicating joy of living even the dreadful certainty of Hades cannot take from them. The age of Homer was the age of the Greek boyhood, of exultant reveling in the splendor of conscious — but not too conscious — life. The age of social order, of reflection and the search for law, of criticism and generalization, was still to come.

## CHAPTER II

### *The Greeks Settle Down*

THE *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* belong, let us say, to the ninth century in literal fact and to the twelfth century in spirit. Their sole interest is in the warlike deeds of a past age. But if Homer had lowered his eyes, he would have seen a new Greece rising on the ruins of the old. His century saw the Dorians already masters of the Peloponnesus, the Achaian civilization replaced by the stern semi-barbarism of the conquering bands from the northern hills. Mycenæ was a heap of ruins, and a Dorian Argos and a Dorian Sparta had taken the place and usurped the names of the cities of Diomedes and Menelaos.

But the Dorian migration was only one of the movements that resulted in the distribution of the Greek peoples as we find them in later times. For at some time between the twelfth century and the sixth, the Thessalians settled in Thessaly, the Bœotians displaced the old Kadmeians and gave their name to Bœotia, and Æolian, Ionian, and Dorian colonies were established in the islands of the eastern Ægean and along the coast of Asia, centering in such cities as Ephesus, Miletus, Smyrna, Halicarnassus, Priene, Kolophon, and Rhodes. Hellas was gradually taking shape, as the Hellenes explored and settled in the Ægean world and beyond it, east and west. Their first explorations belong, no doubt, to the heroic age. The *Odyssey* commemorates the far wandering of the early sailors, and so does the story of Jason and his journey to Colchis in the famous ship *Argo*. Then, probably after a

long interval — for tradition is vague in respect to time — colonies followed these early adventurers, Trebizond near the foot of the Caucasus, Byzantium, Sinope, Abydos, and Chersonesos on the shore of the Crimean peninsula. And far to the west, in Sicily and South Italy, the cities of Syracuse and Croton were only the most notable of the chain of Greek colonies that ended at Marseilles in distant Gaul. These western colonies were probably later than the Black Sea settlements, which again were probably later than the cities of the Anatolian coast. But the 'age of migrations' was practically over when the *Iliad* was written. The Greeks were finding their permanent homes and settling down.

We know almost as little about this period of settlement as we do about the heroic age. But here again a poet gives us one ray of light, a poet far removed from Homer in color and splendor, but in his own way just as significant. And to a modern historian, hungry for even a crumb of positive information, Hesiod has two points of advantage over Homer. Neither one gives us any reliable chronicle of events. But Hesiod is more explicit in his comments on the world he lived in, and we can place him. It was in the unpromising land of Boeotia, a generation or two after Homer, perhaps, that the bard of an obscure village, one to whom Odysseus and Achilles — however picturesque to look back on — would have seemed only savage and destructive wolves of war, sang the songs that give us the first clear utterance of Greek reflection. Hesiod was a poet of the present rather than of the past, of the people rather than of the princes, of the farm rather than of the battlefield. The poor laborers and plowed fields of Ascra were little apt to inspire a poet to chant of flashing spears, whirling chariots, the storming of citadels. Rather would

he turn for his inspiration to the daily toils, the humble problems, the practical morals of the quiet-minded, hard-working, and little traveled dweller among ordinary men. So with the gift of poetry, and the gift also of a shrewd — if a little priggish, pedantic, and provincial — common sense, Hesiod from his quiet valley interprets for us a world of thought and action less brilliant and less fascinating than Homer's but more serious, more conscious, more orderly. A world, moreover, of which he was definitely a part, that he saw with his own eyes and considered.

From a sensible man's point of view there were two things worthy of serious attention. One was religion. Whatever might be said of the gods individually, they represented a fact of life that no one dreamed of denying and that was of an importance impossible to overestimate. It was well worth while then to put together what was known of these unseen and powerful beings, not just to tell stories about them in Homer's picturesque, scrappy, and often frivolous way, but to define and classify them so that a coherent idea might be had of the fundamental truths of theology. The second thing was the practical conduct of life. So Hesiod, aware of his poetical power and gratefully ascribing it to the gods themselves, sang his two immortal songs — the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days*. They are the songs of a sober-minded and hard-headed farmer with a poet's insight and a poet's gift for harmonious measures.

So that in place of Homer's swift and colorful narrative, his brilliant flashes of moral and spiritual insight, his fairy-land world of gods and heroes, we have Hesiod's effort to get at the reason of things, to set forth principles, to find laws that may explain and improve his prosaic world of peace and

work. As a modern writer has said, 'Hesiod is the earliest Greek schoolmaster.' The *Theogony* was to the Greeks an authoritative textbook of systematic theology. The *Works and Days* was a handbook at once of ethics and agriculture. The two together constituted a compendium of wisdom which influenced Greek thought down to the age of Plato.

To summarize the *Theogony* is to destroy its beauty.<sup>1</sup> For the substance of the poem, stated in bald prose, is too strange and fantastic to possess beauty. Yet no one who reads the apostrophe to the Muses, daughters of Zeus, with which the poem begins, will deny that they had indeed touched the old Boeotian's lips and fired his soul.

‘Oh, blessed is the man  
Whome’er the Muses love! Sweet is the voice  
That from his lips flows ever. Is there one  
Who hides some fresh grief in his wounded mind  
And mourns with aching heart? but he, the bard,  
The servant of the Muse, awakes the song  
To deeds of men of old, and blessed gods  
That dwell on Mount Olympus. Straight he feels  
His sorrow stealing in forgetfulness:  
Nor of his griefs remembers aught: so soon  
The Muses’ gift has turned his woes away.’<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Not all concede its beauty. A casual look into my old Lemprière's *Bibliotheca Classica* (ed. 1825) tells me that 'it is a miscellaneous narration executed without art, precision, choice, judgment, or connexion.' On the other hand, Ruskin numbers Hesiod, with Moses, Dante, and Saint John, among 'the men who have taught the purest theological truth hitherto known.' Both judgments would have surprised Plato — Ruskin's most, perhaps.

<sup>2</sup> I regret that I cannot give the source of this translation. It was casually copied long ago from an old book that I cannot now find. For most of the extracts from Hesiod quoted here, I rely upon Mair's excellent prose version. (*Hesiod*, translated by A. W. Mair; Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1908.)

And nobly the Muses' gift availed in the making of the hymn that told how in the beginning Chaos reigned; how Heaven and Earth brought forth giants and nymphs and Titans and one-eyed Cyclopes; how the Titan Kronos became Lord of all things; how Night brought forth Sleep and Death and Care and the Fates; how Kronos was warned that his son would overthrow him and so devoured his children, until his spouse Rhea, giving birth to Zeus in Crete, saved the child by cunning; how in time Zeus became King of Heaven and most powerful of all the gods; how men — weak, blind, ignorant — were lifted to the likeness of gods by the friendship of the Titan Prometheus, who taught them the use of fire and the crafts of life; how Zeus punished Prometheus by chaining him to a rock and punished mankind by creating Pandora, whose fatal curiosity brought bane immeasurable to the human race; how the Titans fought with Zeus and were overthrown by his thunderbolts, so that like Milton's rebel angels they fell through space nine days to the murky gloom of Tartarus; how Zeus wedded his sister Hera; and how still other gods and goddesses and heroes were born, beings visible and invisible, monstrous and beautiful, ranging in wonder from the fifty-headed dog Cerberus — the brazen-tongued hound of Hades — to laughter-loving Aphrodite, born of Heaven and the sea-foam. All these and other marvels, grotesque, no doubt, and yet for some reason immortal, are sung in this strange poem of things weird and wonderful, Europe's first account of the world's genesis.

The *Works and Days*, to the skeptical and matter-of-fact modern mind, is much more intelligible than the *Theogony*. It contains a specific gospel of work and virtue, designed for

the edification and reform of the poet's lazy and thriftless brother Perses. But while Hesiod is presumably addressing Perses throughout, the poem is much more than a series of precepts having only an individual and immediately practical import. The specific case is made the occasion for an effort to find and set forth a real philosophy of life, principles which will indeed apply to the example in hand, but which will at the same time indicate the laws and values that are to the poet fundamental.

The theology and history on which he bases his argument are as fantastic as they are delightful. The story of Pandora's box, opened contrary to orders by the inquisitive fingers of the first woman, and the quarrel between Zeus and Prometheus give him his theory of the origin of evil — on the whole, perhaps, as plausible as Milton's — and the historical introduction to his criticism of his own generation is the immortally picturesque account of the five ages — the age of gold, the age of silver, the age of bronze, the age of heroes, and the age of iron. Hesiod's view of history as of theology is instructive just because it is so naïve, so sincere, so Greek in its satisfaction with artistic appropriateness, its lack of interest in evidence and fact. His place in the growth of Greek thought is not that of a critic or a skeptic, but that of an interpreter, a schoolmaster, whose constant effort is to get things clearly straightened out.

We have seen that an alert, joyous individualism may be considered the most notable characteristic of Homer's heroes. At the very outset of the *Works and Days*, Hesiod states the principle of individualism as he sees it in social life. How startlingly clear and 'modern' is his statement may be seen best by comparing it with an extract

from Kant's *Principles of Politics*.<sup>1</sup> Here is the passage from Kant:

The means which Nature uses to bring about the development of all the capacities she has given man is their antagonism in society, in so far as this *antagonism* becomes in the end a cause of social order. Men have an inclination to associate themselves, for in a social state they feel themselves more completely men: i.e., they are conscious of the development of their natural capacities. But they have also a great propensity to *isolate* themselves, for they find in themselves at the same time this unsocial characteristic: *each wishes to direct everything to his sole notion*, and hence expects resistance, just as he knows that he is inclined to resist others. *It is just this resistance which awakens all man's powers: this brings him to overcome his propensity to indolence, and drives him through the lust for honor, power, or to win for himself a rank among his fellow-men. Man's will is for concord, but Nature knows better what is good for the species, and she wills discord.* He would like a life of comfort and pleasure; Nature wills that he be dragged out of idleness and inactive content, and plunged into labor and trouble in order that he may find out the means of extricating himself from his difficulties. *The natural impulses which prompt this effort, the sources of unsociableness and of the mutual conflict from which so many evils spring are then spurs to a more complete development of man's powers.*

So the modern philosopher. Now compare with this the opening lines of the *Works and Days*:

Not one breed of strife is there on earth, but twain. One shall a man praise where he beholdeth her, but the other is a thing of reproach and diverse altogether are their souls. The one increaseth evil war and contention for forwardness. No man loveth her, albeit the will of the immortals con-

<sup>1</sup> Translation, Hastie: quoted in Dewey and Tufts, *Ethics*, pp. 86-88.

straineth men to worship grievous Strife. But the other is the elder child of black Night, and her the son of Kronos, who dwelleth in the height of Heaven, both in the earth's foundation and among men made mightier far. *She stirreth even the helpless to labor. For when he that hath no business looketh on him that is rich, he hasteth to plow and to plant and to array his house: and neighbor vieth with neighbor hastening to be rich: good is this strife for men. So potter with potter contendeth: the hewer of wood with the hewer of wood: the beggar is jealous of the beggar, the minstrel jealous of the minstrel.*

To assert that Hesiod saw as clearly as Kant all that his generalization involved would be to assert an absurdity. But the fact remains that we have the Homeric individualism become conscious and viewed in its social relation. Self-assertion carried too far is a 'thing of reproach,' a source of 'evil war and contention.' The same quality exercised in moderation 'stirreth even the helpless to labor,' and is the great stimulating force that shakes men from inertia and impels them to noble and fruitful deeds. On this text is built the whole didactic argument of the *Works and Days*. Violence and injustice, the two great forces that make for social disintegration, are the results of extreme self-assertion, the evil breed of strife. Work, guided and controlled by justice, is the fruit of the better form of strife, the more moderate and restrained self-assertion which is expressed in emulation.

This is developed and illustrated in detail, after an excursus in which the evils of life are accounted for by the story of Prometheus and Pandora, and the existing race of men contrasted with those that had preceded it. The two stories pave the way for a bitter arraignment of the poet's own age, the age of iron. Even this he says will be worse before it has

run its course, and the statement of the evils that will be the sign of approaching doom give us an idea of what Hesiod meant by good and evil.

Father shall not be like to his children, neither the children like unto the father: neither shall guest to host, nor friend to friend, nor brother to brother be dear as aforetime: and they shall give no honor to their swiftly ageing parents, and shall chide them with words of bitter speech, sinful men knowing not the fear of the gods. These will not return to their aged parents the price of their nurture: but might shall be right, and one shall sack the other's city. Neither shall there be any respect of the oath abiding or the just or of the good: rather shall they honor the doer of evil and the man of insolence. Right shall lie in might of hand, and Reverence shall be no more: the bad shall wrong the better man, speaking crooked words and abetting them with an oath. Envy, brawling, rejoicing in evil, of hateful countenance, shall follow all men to their sorrow. Then verily shall Reverence and Awe veil their fair bodies in white robes and depart from the wide-wayed earth unto Olympus to join the company of the Immortals, forsaking men.

Now this is distinctly instructive. It is a picture of the evil breed of strife, of individualism run riot, of insolence overcoming reverence, of *hubris* supplanting *aidōs*.<sup>1</sup> It would not be difficult to parallel in Homer every item of Hesiod's condemnation. The advance on the older poet is simply in clearness and definiteness of statement. What is occasionally implied in Homer is in Hesiod a downright and clearly understood conviction. And he proceeds to amplify by precept and illustration his whole conception of insolence, with

<sup>1</sup> Reverence and awe are Mair's words for *aidōs* and *nemesis* — a bad translation, but I cannot suggest a better one.

its attendant vices of injustice and violence, and of the virtues opposed to these — reverence, awe, justice. The fable of the hawk and the nightingale is told to illustrate the typical attitude of the insolent tyrant, the attitude corresponding to the motto that might is right. ‘Wretch!’ cries the hawk to his victim, ‘wherefore dost thou shriek? Lo, thou art held in the grasp of a stronger. There shalt thou go even where I carry thee, for all thy minstrelsy. And as I will, I shall make my meal of thee or let thee go. A fool is he who would contend with the stronger.’ Odysseus’ comment on the punishment of the suitors<sup>1</sup> and Apollo’s condemnation of Achilles’ treatment of the dead body of Hector<sup>2</sup> do indeed warn us not to look upon Hesiod’s reprobation of insolent pride as a wholly new phenomenon; but what is little more than an instinct of sportsmanship in Homer is in Hesiod a bitter resentment of injustice. The warlike pride which is romantic and picturesque to the courtly bard and is only reproved when it goes beyond the usages of chivalry is unlovely and wrong to the Boeotian farmer. He does not advocate rebellion. What is the use? But at least he can say what he thinks of the situation. And he is great enough not merely to utter a sullen complaint but to state a rational moral conviction — the conviction that wrong will bring its own punishment.

For Hesiod clearly understood his own attitude. He is preaching the first sermon on the pre-eminently Greek virtue of *sophrosune*, moderation, temperance, the opposite of insolence and overweening pride. ‘Fools!’ he cries to the ‘bribe-devouring princes’ who have given an unjust decision for a little gain, ‘Fools! Who know not how much better

<sup>1</sup> *Odyssey*, xxii, 412 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Iliad*, xxiv, 34 ff.

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the half is than the whole, nor what blessedness there is in mallow and asphodel.'<sup>1</sup> And injustice is not only folly, a superficial estimate of life's values, but it brings, in the long run, misery. 'Whoso shall have seized in compliance with his shamelessness, even though it be but a little, yet that little curdles his heart's blood.'

Crude, moreover, as is Hesiod's conception of the gods, he goes far toward making divine law, the stern insistence on righteousness, take the place of Fate. Certainly he has no doubt regarding the attitude of Zeus toward injustice and insolence.

Wealth is not to be seized violently: god-given wealth is better far, for if any one even with his hands shall have taken great wealth, or if he steal it by craft of tongue, as chanceth often times when greed beguileth the mind of men and shamelessness trampleth upon shame, lightly the gods abase him and make that man's house decay, and wealth attendeth him but for a little while. Alike is he who wrongeth a suppliant and he who wrongeth a guest... or he who in his foolishness sinneth against fatherless children: or who chideth an aged person on the evil threshold of old age, assailing him with harsh words. Against him surely Zeus himself is angered, and in the end for his unrighteous work, he layeth on him a stern recompense.

Contrasted with this is the picture of the blessedness attending justice.

But whoso to stranger and to townsman deal straight judgment, and no whit depart from justice, their city flourisheth and the people prosper therein. And there is in their land peace, the nurse of children, and Zeus doth never

<sup>1</sup> Two common and inexpensive vegetables, as if a modern discussing the simple life were to mention beans and cereals, black bread and onions.

decree war for them. Neither doth famine ever consort with men who deal straight judgments nor doom: but with mirth they tend the works that are their care. For them earth beareth much livelihood and on the hills the oak's top beareth acorns, the oak's midst bees: their fleecy sheep are heavy with wool: their wives bear children like unto their parents: they flourish with good things continually, neither go they on ships, but bounteous earth beareth fruit for them. But whoso ensue evil insolence and forward works, for them doth Zeus of the far-seeing eyes, the son of Kronos, decree justice.

In such a vein discourses this preacher of practical ethics, never wearying of his essential conviction that insolent pride is the cardinal sin of the strong, that justice is far better, and that the proud fool can learn moderation and wisdom only through labor and suffering.

'Preacher' is not, perhaps, quite the right word, with its associations of fervor and spiritual elevation. Clear and sound as are Hesiod's moral precepts, they are based on no lofty sanction and inspired by no very generous ideal. The advice given is often cynical and often mean. Honesty is the best *policy*, and wisdom is not insight or understanding but prudence in practical affairs. In its strength and its weakness it is the teaching of a mind neither Homeric in its range and power nor Æschylean in its moral grandeur, but wonderfully keen, shrewd, penetrating, and clear, seeing the moral necessities of his society, and presenting them with a force and quaint homeliness that gave his poetry a permanent hold on the Greek race. The lyric and tragic poets and the great thinkers of the fifth and fourth centuries did indeed so reconstruct and transform the ethics of Hesiod that the result in the hands of Plato was a fuller and more beautiful

interpretation of life. But this is no disparagement of Hesiod. As he himself sorrowfully admitted, he is the voice of an iron age. Nevertheless he shows the iron being tempered, Greek individualism becoming rational and social. Moreover, if he lacks the magnificence of Isaiah, he lacks also the bitter melancholy of Ecclesiastes. He is neither a prophet nor a pessimist. He is a village sage telling plain people how a sensible man ought to behave, a herald of reasonableness. ‘Best is that man who thinketh on all things for himself, taking heed to that which shall be better afterward, and in the end: and good too is he who hearkeneth to good advice: but whoso neither thinketh himself nor layeth to heart the words of another — he again is a useless man.’ What could be more sensible, unless it is the priceless summing-up of the *Works and Days*: ‘Anon a day is a stepmother, anon a mother. Therein happy and blessed is he who, knowing all these things, worketh his work blameless before the deathless gods, reading omens and avoiding sin.’

Even if there were no other evidence than the *Works and Days*, we should know that the world of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* had passed away, giving place to one more settled, more law-abiding, more reflective, more anxious. Just how far the change had gone toward making the unruly barbarians of the past into the responsible citizens of the future, what the steps of the process were, we do not know so surely. It is evident, however, that the political life of Hesiod’s time already centered in cities. And it continued so to the end. More and more the city, the *polis*, came to be the type form of Greek society, and our word ‘politics,’ a purely Greek word, is a memorial of a civilization that thought in terms

of the *polis* and the *polis* alone. When we come to historic times, the Greek 'city-state' had already passed through the various stages of its evolution and become a settled and well-understood thing, and in the next chapter we shall give some account of one city — Athens — that will illustrate the main features of that evolution. But in the meantime there is one Dorian city, Sparta (more often called by the Greek writers Lacedæmon), that should be examined first, because for all her fame and power in the fifth and fourth centuries she belongs in her institutions and mental habits to a much earlier age. Intensely conservative, she kept in her social and political life much that was primitive, as some parts of Europe remained mediæval in the nineteenth century. And while we have no justification for regarding her as in any way a perfect type, while also we have no positive evidence about her except what later writers tell us, yet all the fifth-century testimony about Sparta points to a sort of arrogant loneliness, a bleak and stubborn pride in being four hundred years behind the times.

Certainly the essential characteristics of the Sparta of historic record, no matter how they had been modified in form and detail, were very ancient; and in some degree they seem to give us a picture, overlaid and blurred as it may be, of a society that survived in part here after it had perished in the rest of Greece. All the cities passed through fairly definite and similar constitutional changes. Sparta did too, but in her own cautious way, never discarding the older forms of monarchy and aristocracy and without ever coming under the rule of a tyrant. She preserved her history in her institutions, as it were, and remained to the end a monarchy, an aristocracy, even a sort of democracy, a combination not

altogether unlike that pictured in Homer. Yet with this composite character she attained so distinctive a unity of form and spirit that the ascription of her entire social system to a ninth-century law-giver, Lykurgos, became an almost universally accepted tradition.

In the age when we first have definite and positive knowledge of Sparta, the fifth century, the city was governed by two kings equal in rank whose functions were mainly priestly and military; by an executive and advisory Council of Elders chosen for life from the noble families by the whole body of citizens; by a general elective and legislative assembly composed of all free Spartans over the age of thirty; and five Ephors elected from and by the freemen whose duty it was to administer civil justice and to safeguard the constitution. The citizens by no means included all residents in the city. Indeed, the true Spartans were never more than an army of occupation. They held all the power, while the *perioikoi* or dwellers roundabout — descendants, no doubt, of the original population — and the Helots did all the work, agricultural, industrial, and commercial. From the modern point of view the result was, of course, an aristocracy. When Sparta was termed a democracy in view of the sovereign power of the general assembly of all citizens, the ‘outsiders’ and slaves were simply ignored. The Spartans were the landholders, the rulers, and the backbone of the army. No Spartan worked, and in order to prevent any possible growth of the commercial spirit or accumulation of wealth, the coinage was a cumbrous affair of iron.

But the political constitution of Sparta was far from being the city's most striking feature. That which made Sparta famous was her system of discipline, a system that seems

so strikingly — if in some ways distortedly — to apply the ideas of Hesiod that one cannot but look with favor on the tradition that ascribed it not only to one man but to a contemporary of the poet.<sup>1</sup> This does not mean, of course, that the Sparta of the fifth century was in all respects the Sparta of the ninth and eighth centuries. Knowing as we do that seventh-century Sparta was producing artistic pottery and metal work and carrying on trade with Egypt and Lydia,<sup>2</sup> we are bound to suspect that the unlovely aspects of the later city, the rigidity of its militarism, the suppression of all non-military culture, were not characteristic of the earlier age. Even Sparta changed. Nevertheless, the Lykurgos myth has its merits in accounting for the facts. Certainly the educational system on which the strength of Sparta was based is in great measure a practical application of the principles laid down in the *Works and Days*, enough to suggest that Hesiod was not isolated, but was expressing a program more or less generally recognized of which this one illustration survived.

One difference there is, indeed, and an important one. Hesiod assumes an environment of peace. War is a dread plague, to be classed with famine and disease. His outlook is that of the peaceful farmer. Lykurgos, on the other hand,

<sup>1</sup> For the constitution and discipline of Sparta see Plutarch, *Lykurgos*, and Xenophon, *The Polity of the Lacedæmonians* (Dakyns's translation). As to dates see Herodotus, II, 53; Thucydides, I, 18. For convenient summaries of the evidence see the introduction to Mair's *Hesiod*, Holm, *History of Greece*, I, 187, note 6, and the article by T. W. Allen on 'The Date of Hesiod' in *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, xxxv. Then compare Herodotus, I, 65, 66, and Aristotle, *Politics*, II, 10–12. Thucydides does not mention the name of Lykurgos, but he concurs with the tradition that Sparta has preserved the same form of government for rather more than four hundred years, reckoning from the end of the Peloponnesian War.

<sup>2</sup> Dickins, in *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, xxxii, 12.

legislated for an army of Dorian conquerors. His constitution and discipline aimed at the preservation of the supremacy won by the sword, the maintenance of the strength and hardihood of men who were lords of the soil and intended to remain so. The aim of Spartan education corresponded to the Spartan purpose in life, and the boy was taught to be a fighter, not a worker. But physical strength and skill were a small part of the Spartan requirement. The Hesiodic ideals of restraint, reverence and awe, the Hesiodic condemnation of insolence, violence, unrestrained self-expression and self-assertion, even the Hesiodic approval of emulation, were all embodied in the very substance of Spartan education.

At the basis of Hesiod's morals is the realization of the social relation. Violence, injustice, is to him an abomination. Justice is the inexorable and absolute law of life of which *hubris* is the negation, and justice is really the recognition of social obligation. Now it was this principle that was the very heart of the Spartan system. Not gymnastics, not the more obvious and direct training of the individual fighter, but the subordination of the individual to the state, was the secret of Sparta's long supremacy and lasting fame. Yet there was no autocrat in Sparta. Each citizen was so identified with the state, saw so little antagonism between his own will and the 'general will,' that there was no consciousness of any repression of the individual. Patriotism was a second nature, even a passion, rather than a duty. 'Though free,' said the Spartan Demaratus to Xerxes, 'they are not absolutely free; for they have a master over them, the law, which they fear much more than your subjects do you.'<sup>1</sup> Education in Sparta, then, was fundamentally moral and social — not a

<sup>1</sup> Herodotus, vii, 104.

mere training of athletes and spearmen. It aimed, through instruction, emulation, exercise, training in responsibility and initiative, to make citizens — men and women of the fullest individual power to judge and to act for themselves who would yet find their good at every point identical with and inseparable from that of their country.

Their method of accomplishing this in historic times is well known and needs little exposition. At the age of seven the child was taken from his parents and associated with companions of his own age under the direction of the state. Divided into companies, the boys and girls ate, slept, played, fought, and received their instruction together. Over each company was placed a leader, the *Iren*, who was two years removed from boyhood — i.e., twenty years of age. Every citizen was a supervisor of morals, a critic of conduct and of efficiency, but it was the *Iren* who was peculiarly responsible for the boys of his company. Their curriculum was very simple. ‘As for learning, they had just what was absolutely necessary (gymnastics and music). All the rest of their education was calculated to make them subject to command, to endure labor, to fight and to conquer.’<sup>1</sup> ‘He who showed the most conduct and courage amongst them was made captain of his company. The rest kept their eyes upon him, obeyed his orders, and bore with patience the punishments he inflicted; so that their whole education was an education in obedience. The old men were present at their diversions, and often suggested some occasion of dispute or quarrel that they might observe with exactness the spirit of each and their firmness in battle.’ ‘The *Iren*, reposing himself after supper, used to order some of the boys to sing a song; to another he

<sup>1</sup> Xenophon, *The Polity of the Lacedæmonians*, II.

put some question which required a judicious answer, for example: "Who was the best man in the city?" or, "What he thought of such an action?" This accustomed them from their childhood to judge of the virtues, to enter into the affairs of their countrymen.'

This emphasis of virtue, and of the identification of each member of the state with the whole, makes the permission to steal seem a paradox. It is indeed the most curious feature of the whole system. Yet it may be understood if we keep in mind three things: (1) that the Spartan was not a business man but a landowner of the simplest tastes and habits, almost a communist, valuing but little what we call rights of property; (2) that throwing a boy wholly or largely on his own resources, with the certainty that he would go hungry if he failed and be soundly beaten if he were caught, was in itself a most valuable experience, an ideal training for the life of a Spartan soldier; (3) that this boyish thievery and its purpose were so well understood and appreciated by both boys and citizens, and social solidarity, the close relation between the members of the state, so emphasized, that the moral and social evil of the stealing was practically nullified.<sup>1</sup>

That the Spartan system of rigid moral education by the state and for the state was wonderfully successful up to a certain point, and that it gave the little city on the Eurotas

<sup>1</sup> It must be remembered that when a boy was punished if caught in the act, it was for clumsiness, not for stealing. 'An objector may retort: "But if he [Lykurgos] thought it so fine a feat to steal, why did he inflict all those blows on the unfortunate who was caught?" My answer is: for the selfsame reason which induces people, in other matters which are taught, to punish the careless performance of a service.' (Xenophon, *op. cit.*, II, 8.)

an unquestioned leadership among the Greeks for many years, no one will deny. Yet it ultimately failed, and the reasons for the failure are both clear and significant. The first, and perhaps the most fundamental, is that the whole system, however sound as a discipline for a specific purpose, came to be, as time passed, utterly out of tune with the rest of Hellas. Even its merits had no place in an eager and living world. Frozen and static, complacent in its obstinate isolation, it rested on a deadly patriotism, intolerant of every point of view or interest not its own. Secondly, the maintenance of the state and its power was viewed as an end in itself, dominating all private ends and ignoring all the possibilities of life that did not contribute in some direct way to the unity and supremacy of Sparta. Above every citizen was the law, and the sole purpose of the law was the preservation of the city. No matter how much each Spartan felt himself to be part of the state, it yet bound him in iron fetters, and from those fetters he could escape only by death or exile. All-pervasive, unprogressive, unelastic, the very excellence of the laws attributed to Lykurgos killed the city that they lifted to greatness. They were an attempt to reduce to final and perfect form something whose life depends on its power of expansion, change, eternal readjustment.<sup>1</sup>

Exclusive, narrow, arrogant, unable to embody in their personal and political ideal the lessons of experience, the Lacedæmonians were bound to come to a time when the mechanical excellence of their system would meet an environment which it could not dominate and to which it could not

<sup>1</sup> This criticism of the Spartan system is, of course, a modern one. For a detailed criticism from the Greek point of view see Aristotle, *Politics*, II, chapters 9 and 10.

adjust itself. And the ultimate failure of the system as a whole indicated the weakness of the education on which it was built. The Spartan boy was trained to take his place in an exclusive club whose by-laws were jealously guarded against change, in a caste to whose members all outsiders were unregarded and despised aliens, in an aristocracy which regarded the whole economic and almost the whole reflective and æsthetic sides of life with suspicion and disdain. And yet so massively did Sparta build her constitution on some of the most admirable and enduring elements in human nature, so marvelously did her discipline emphasize at once self-activity and an absorbing sense of duty, that the Spartan type of character will never lose a certain stern and even ennobling fascination. The world has remembered its virtues and has been willing to throw a veil over its defects. Unflinching valor, uncomplaining endurance, unfaltering devotion to the commonwealth — these are in the main the things we associate with Sparta. And the most profound of Athenian thinkers found it possible to make the great Dorian military state the pattern of his ideal republic.

What then is the net result of our effort to see what the ninth-century Greeks were like — these people who could produce immortal poetry, who could think clearly about the problems of wise living, but who were still children in so many ways, ignorant, unsophisticated, living in a world of fancies and realities inextricably interwoven? And what can we know of their 'civilization' in the strict sense of the word, their progress in the art of living together? Not very much with certainty, for our sure evidence is limited to the poets. Any inference we might draw from Sparta is

after all doubtful, resting only on the persistent tradition of later ages that the Spartan constitution was formed at about the time when Hesiod wrote the *Works and Days* and kept its essential character with less change than occurred in other cities. But even if our guess is wrong, and the historic Sparta should turn out to have little resemblance to the earlier city, there are in Hesiod enough signs of social order to show an integrating process going on, and enough criticism to show a constructive discontent. The Homeric looseness of social relations was evidently — though no doubt slowly — giving place to the compact organization of the *polis*, the idea of law, almost wholly absent in Homer, taking clearer form in the Greek mind. To say that this was universal and uniform would be to say what we do not know and is not particularly probable. But neither is it probable that Sparta was an entirely isolated case or Hesiod's testimony true only of Boeotia. At any rate, we can be sure that the Greeks were settling down and considering things. We might even allow ourselves to go a little farther and say that they had discovered — not explored — four pregnant words that held the possibility of almost the whole ethical philosophy of the future — *hubris* and *sophrosune*, *aidōs* and *nemesis*.

## CHAPTER III

### *The City-State of Athens*

#### I

IN THE rugged peninsula of Attica, ridged with rocky hills and seamed with glens, there are three small plains — Aphidna, of which Marathon is a part, the Thriasian plain round about Eleusis, and the plain of Athens. All became famous, but only the plain of Athens could have been the site of a great city. The soil is light and stony, of scanty profit to the farmer and a woeful contrast to the rich fields across the hills in Boeotia. But for defense against enemies, for access to the sea, and for harborage, the position of Athens was unequaled in Greece. The Argive plain in the Peloponnesus came second, but Argos had no harbor comparable to either Phaleron or the Peiræus. The mountain walls of Parnes, Pentelicus, and Hymettus ringed it about in an irregular semicircle, and where there were no mountains there was the sea. Four miles from the rocky beach (*akte*) that gave its name to the peninsula rose the steep rock of the Acropolis, an obvious fortress, and around this rock — made safe against surprise by the easy view of the whole plain from the hills to the coast — gathered the Greek settlers who chose to remain here while their Achaian kinsmen went on across the Isthmus to occupy the Peloponnesus.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This seems probable, but there is no certainty about it. The Athenians were Ionians, but that throws no light on their origin. No one knows how and when they came to Attica, and they may have been there all through the period of Cretan supremacy, as the Theseus legend seems to imply. For the position and environment of Athens see the ever-useful Baedeker or — to name only one book out of many — Maffay, *Rambles in Greece*, chapters 1–8.

Like all the Greek states Athens was originally a monarchy.<sup>1</sup> Among the names of her kings, half or wholly mythical as they may be, one stands out in pre-eminent fame. Theseus was to Athens what Charlemagne was to France and Germany, Arthur to Britain, Rodrigo el Cid to Spain, every national hero to his people, and unhappily he is like most of the others in that we have absolutely no account of him that we can call historical and rely on as indubitable fact. For the Theseus of legend who delivered Athens from the tyranny of Crete by killing the Minotaur, we must refer those who do not already know the tale to Plutarch, and it is a tale most instructive and diverting whether it be historically reliable or not. But the cautious Thucydides notes one incident that is worth recording:

In the days of Cecrops and the first kings, down to the reign of Theseus, Attica was divided into communes, having their own town halls and magistrates. Except in case of alarm the whole people did not assemble in council under the king, but administered their own affairs and advised together in their several townships. Some of them at times went to war with him.... But when Theseus came to the throne, being a powerful as well as a wise ruler, among other improvements in the administration of the country he dissolved the councils and separate governments and united all the inhabitants of Attica in the present city, establishing one council and town hall. They continued to live on their own lands, but he compelled them to resort to Athens as their metropolis, and henceforward they were all inscribed on the roll of her citizens. A great city thus arose which was handed down by Theseus to his descendants, and from his day to this the Athenians

<sup>1</sup> Any reader who wishes to have a glimpse of a legendary Athens not discussed in sober histories, may find Plato's *Critias* worth looking into.

have regularly celebrated the national festival of the *Synoikia* or ‘union of the communes’ in honor of the goddess Athena.<sup>1</sup>

But the monarchy faded out, and Athens became an aristocracy. Tradition has it that this came about in a curious way. Attica was oppressed by a formidable invasion. The oracle at Delphi announced that the army whose leader should be killed would be victorious. So the Athenian king Kodros disguised himself and was killed, the invaders — when they heard what had happened — immediately withdrawing in acceptance of the oracle’s word. The Athenians, it is said, deemed no one worthy to succeed the king who had sacrificed his life for his country, and, while his descendants were for some time allowed to retain the title and a position of high honor, government was actually put into commission. But whether this tale be true at all or wholly an invention, we have no means of knowing. It is much more likely that the process was a gradual one.<sup>2</sup> The poems of Homer show so clearly that the king was only the first among equals that there is nothing difficult to understand in the transition from monarchy to aristocracy. The powerful chiefs who could insult and defy Agamemnon, who could take matters into their own hands at Ithaka in the absence of Odysseus, might easily end by shelving the king entirely.

So by the middle of the seventh century before our era the government of Athens was in the hands of an executive committee of the landowners, a commission of nine magistrates. Of these one, the nominal head of the government, was called *archon*, a word which means literally governor, president,

<sup>1</sup> Thucydides, II, 15, Jowett’s translation.

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, *Constitution of the Athenians*, 3.

ruler; one held the title of king (*basileus*) and concerned himself with the sacrifices, always an important department of civic affairs; one was polemarch or commander-in-chief of the forces; and the remaining six, *thesmothetai*, or legislators, were mainly judges, recorders, keepers of documents. These were all elected from the nobles (*eupatridai*), in early times by the venerable Council of the Areopagus, later by the citizens in assembly. How the Council of the Areopagus itself was constituted we do not know,<sup>1</sup> but it was the chief directing power in Athens during the period of the aristocracy, at once a supreme court and a body of supervisors. A general assembly (*Ekklesia*), and a smaller group, the Council of Four Hundred and One, which was practically an advisory and initiating committee of the *Ekklesia* selected by lot, dealt with all the larger issues of the state. And these — the *Ekklesia*, a council chosen from the *Ekklesia*, a smaller life council, the Areopagus, and the nine who made up the executive—constituted the framework of the Athenian polity during the history of the city.

The internal political history of Athens during the sixth century turned around the widening of the franchise, the breaking down of class qualifications for holding office, the shifting of the power from the *eupatridai* to the *demos*. The word *eupatridai* corresponded to the Roman word — more familiar to English readers — *patricians*, and similarly the Greek *demos*, which we roughly translate ‘common people,’ corresponded to the Roman *plebs*. The struggle between *eupatridai* and *demos*, like that between patricians and plebs, is simply a phase of the world-old struggle between gentry and commons, privileged and unprivileged, and its sole signifi-

<sup>1</sup> Possibly of retired archons. Membership was for life.

cance to us at present lies in the practically universal truth that this struggle takes place only among a people alert, vigorous, pulsing with an eager individualism that resents both oppression and social or political privilege. It is a familiar phenomenon in the annals of Europe, unfamiliar in those of Asia.

Every Greek state saw the conflict, and it took forms that have given us some of the most familiar terms in our political vocabulary. Thus to a Greek a monarch (one ruling alone) might be called king (*basileus*) — which meant an hereditary priest-judge-war lord of the Agamemnon or Odysseus type, who held his office by birth, by divine or semi-divine descent, i.e., by the ‘grace of God’ — or tyrant (*tyrannos*), whose power was derived from some other source, such as a revolution or *coup d'état*. Thus a Greek would have called Charles I and Louis XVI kings, Cromwell and Napoleon tyrants, no matter what their individual merits as rulers. An aristocracy — literally the rule of the best — was practically the rule of hereditary landowning nobles. An oligarchy was also the rule of a few, of a class, but a class whose membership was determined not by birth but by force, office, or wealth. A democracy was naturally the rule of the *demos*, with a suffrage that included all free citizens. All of these forms took slavery for granted.<sup>1</sup>

The main lines of the movement from aristocracy to democracy in Athens are fortunately pretty clear. The first step was taken some time in the seventh century, when the class divisions of the city were readjusted — for purposes of voting and holding office — on the basis of wealth rather than of

<sup>1</sup> For a statement of the Greek attitude to slavery see Aristotle, *Politics*, I, 4–13.

birth. When this was done the aristocracy, strictly speaking, became an oligarchy. But this concession to the wealthier among the *demos* was like the crack in the dyke. It only increased the discontent and the hope of those not favored. By the beginning of the sixth century the city was torn by dissensions, and the focal points of the trouble were apparently two: first, the few rich were becoming richer and the many poor were becoming poorer, forced to mortgage their property, to sell themselves and their families into slavery; and secondly, those who were thus increasing in economic power had absolute control over the administration and the courts, as if our millionaires not only owned the land, the oil, the sugar, the coal, and the railroads, but presided in the White House, nominated the judges, and supervised all the machinery of government. Legally the people were powerless, but actually their agitation reduced the city to a state of sedition that finally compelled some sort of compromise.

An arbiter was found who was acceptable to all parties. Solon, a wealthy *eupatrid* who was at the same time a man of international — i.e., pan-Hellenic — reputation for wisdom and integrity, was elected archon in the year 594 b.c. with the understanding that he was to carry through a program of reform that would ensure peace. He faced with courage both the economic and the political evils that were ruining the city. The more immediate and pressing grievance he relieved by the simple expedient of cancelling the debts and nullifying the mortgages for which the debtor's person was pledged. To provide for the future he introduced a law compelling every citizen to teach his sons some trade, and adopted a better and more widely used coinage than the one in use, recognizing that the economic future of Athens

lay in industry and commerce rather than agriculture. As to politics, he instituted two changes that made the ultimate victory of democracy inevitable. Confirming the division of the people into four classes on the basis of wealth and leaving the main responsibilities and privileges of government in the hands of the well-to-do, he yet admitted all citizens into the *Ekklesia* as voting members, including the fourth class, the *thetes* (the Roman *proletariæ*), hitherto excluded. And he entrusted to the people judicial as well as legislative power through the *Heliaia* or popular court, a court that could hear appeals and could hold to account all magistrates, even the archons, at the end of their term of office. All voters were also jurors. No longer were the people to be helpless before their rulers.

Solon's reforms went too far to please the powerful and not far enough to please the *demos*. The dissensions of the city continued, for the 'people' were unable to break the 'ring' of professional politicians. Law or no law the rich families and their clients still held the reins of government, handicapped as they no doubt were by the *Ekklesia* and the *Heliaia*. Neither *demos* nor oligarchs would yield, and sedition accordingly turned into revolution. The deadlock was broken and the class monopoly of office ended by the rise of a *tyrannos*, Pisistratus. Himself a noble, he was yet the leader and champion of the *demos*, and his 'tyranny' shows the near association of what would seem the two political opposites, democracy and despotism. There is nothing abnormal or unusual about it, instructive as is each particular case. For democracy, by virtue both of unwieldy numbers and the combination in many citizens of jealousy and political incapacity, doubt as to what ought to be done and unwillingness to trust

others, has frequently led to a peculiarly absolute loyalty to one leader of proven ability.<sup>1</sup> Whether such a tyranny can last depends quite largely on the tact of the tyrant, and because of this it has seldom lasted beyond one lifetime, often not beyond a few months or a few years, though the Roman Empire is an illustration of a tyranny that lasted for ages.

In the case of Athens the tyranny of Pisistratus endured for thirty-three years<sup>2</sup> and was safely handed down to his sons Hippias and Hipparchus. Their government apparently was justified by results. ‘No tyrants,’ says Thucydides, ‘ever displayed greater merit or capacity than these. Although the tax on the produce of the soil which they exacted amounted to only five per cent, they improved and adorned the city and carried on successful wars.... The city meanwhile was permitted to retain her ancient laws; but the family of Pisistratus took care that one of their number should always be in office.’

But Athens in time grew tired of even an excellent tyranny. It served its purpose in undermining the long established power of the nobles and in educating the *demos*, but as a permanent thing it was ill-suited to the restless genius of the Athenians. A conspiracy resulted in the assassination of Hipparchus. The survivor’s resentment and fear tightened his control, tightened it beyond the endurance of the people. A second conspiracy overthrew Hippias and he fled to Persia. The time seemed ripe then for a final and radical reconstruction. The reforms of Cleisthenes (509 b.c.) swept away the old tribal divisions, redivided the people into ten new tribes —

<sup>1</sup> For example, Napoleon — both Napoleons. Shall we say also Lenin, Stalin, Mussolini, Hitler?

<sup>2</sup> Nineteen of actual government. There were two periods of exile.

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destroying the old sectionalism and with it the still surviving tradition of aristocratic superiority — and re-established the Council on the basis of fifty from each tribe, chosen every year by lot, no citizen being allowed to hold office more than twice in a lifetime. This had obvious disadvantages, but the certainty that every member of the *Ekklesia* would at some time serve on the Council must have ensured an invaluable political training. A little later, (501 b.c.) there was established a new popular executive of ten *strategoi* or generals, one from each tribe, which soon displaced the archons in actual administrative power. Democracy was now an accomplished fact.<sup>1</sup> Solon, Pisistratus and Cleisthenes had brought about a revolution.

When the fifth century opened the *Ekklesia*, the general assembly of all free Athenians, was the final source of all power; the Council of Five Hundred was an executive, initiating, and supervising body to which all citizens were eligible; the Council of the Areopagus still existed as a high court for the trial of certain special cases, such as treason and perhaps murder; and the administration was carried on by the nine archons and the ten *strategoi*, all chosen annually by and from the *Ekklesia*. This sounds and was complicated; it was the constitution of a jealous people; and the scattering of authority, the annual elections, the supreme power of an easily swayed popular assembly, and the democratic judge-and-jury courts gave dangerous opportunity to impulses of panic, rage, cruelty, and foolishness. It was at its worst in a crisis, at its best when it was not functioning.

Nevertheless the fact that it was frequently content not to

<sup>1</sup> After the year 487 the archons were chosen by lot, but the *strategoi* continued to be elected, and could be re-elected without limit.

function was a merit of no mean order. A danger, too, no doubt. It gave ample opportunity to wily politicians — demagogue is a Greek word — and statecraft might easily be little more than the art of pleasing the ‘many-headed multitude.’<sup>1</sup> Yet until the trying years of the Peloponnesian War the result was better than a modern critic might expect. Perhaps the great statesmen that the Athenian democracy certainly produced found their task and their success all the more stimulating because it was so perilous, so exacting, so precarious. For any man who held power in Athens held it as the elected servant of the people, chosen and obeyed because of his ability to rule, liable to be dismissed, fined, or exiled at any time if the all-powerful *demos* decided to reject him. Normally, in the fifth century, the city was governed by the ablest, the most popular, and the most persuasive of the *strategoi*.<sup>2</sup>

Up to the time when the city became a democracy she was in no sense imperial. Centuries before, as we have seen, Attica and Athens had been made politically co-extensive. That is to say, a farmer residing in the farthest corner of Attica, a sailor who lived in the Peiræus, might be just as fully possessed of the rights of citizenship as a man who lived under the shadow of the Acropolis. No more territory was wanted. There had been wars, but only with an occasional invader or with troublesome neighbors — Eleusis, Salamis, or Ægina. The people were mostly craftsmen, mer-

<sup>1</sup> Plato, *Republic*, vi, 492–93. No student of the Athenian democracy should fail to read this passage.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Thus Athens, though still in name a democracy, was in fact ruled by her greatest citizen.’ So Thucydides (ii, 63) comments on the long tenure of office by Pericles, re-elected year after year, without a break, from 461 to his death in 429.

chants, and sailors, with pottery as the chief article of export, for Athens led the world in ceramics. There were agriculturists, naturally, but the soil of Athens was relatively poor while her position for commerce was peculiarly good. Ships sailed from her seaport, the Peiræus, to all parts of the Ægean and westward to Italy and Sicily.<sup>1</sup> Her intellectual life was keen and her education broad and elastic, based on the three essential subjects of the Greek curriculum — music, letters, and athletics. She had produced only one man of wide reputation, Solon, but she was rich, enterprising, and vigorous, easily one of the first cities of Greece. And she had apparently reached the end of the long period of internal dissension. The old landowning patrician families were still strong, still lifted above the common level by the pride of illustrious descent that is far from unknown in modern democracies, but the whole body of citizens, rich and poor, noble and simple, held the reins of power, and with a brief interval were to continue to hold them to the end of the story.

## II

Now let us anticipate events a little so that we may better estimate the significance of what turned out to be the most momentous crisis in the history of the city-state — a crisis more fateful than any faced by Theseus or Solon. Hardly had Athens achieved democracy than she had to bear the brunt of the Persian invasion. Victory brought responsibility, and responsibility brought empire, when the city leaped forward to wider ventures, glorying not only in her freedom but

<sup>1</sup> For instance, the largest finds of Athenian vases have been in Tuscany, and vases signed by the same painter have been found in Italy and in Asia Minor.

in the power that freedom made the more intoxicating. For a little while — in the words of her most illustrious son — ‘reverence was our queen and mistress and made us live in obedience to the laws.’<sup>1</sup> But those words were written by one who had seen freedom and empire ruin his city. He had seen intoxication sink into drunkenness, pride invite destruction, the poison of democracy bring about ‘the universal conceit of omniscience and lawlessness.’ That poison was fatal. A century and a half after her greatest triumph the independence of Athens was gone forever.

What would have happened to the democracy if it had not had to face the test of a life-and-death war and the still more trying test of victory, no one would dare to say with any confidence. What did happen it is best to see through Greek eyes. Not contemporary eyes, for no one could see what was coming or how it would work out. No prophet arose during the time of Cleisthenes or for four generations after to sound a warning, and if one had arisen he would have been as ineffective as Cassandra. But in the disillusioned fourth century Plato and Aristotle, then two centuries after Aristotle another Greek, Polybius, looked back reflectively and tried to understand what had occurred. A century later still one of the wisest of the Romans, himself a member of a city whose political evolution — at any rate up to the achievement of democracy — had been a close parallel to that of Athens, surveyed the whole matter from the angle of one who was a lawyer and a statesman as well as a philosopher. The net result is not only an illuminating commentary on the city-

<sup>1</sup> Plato, *Laws*, 698 — an impressive survey of the way Athens bore herself during the period of the Persian wars, followed by a study of her decline.

state, but a permanently valuable philosophy of politics. And a thoroughly Greek one. Even Cicero was a Greek while he was writing the *De Republica*, trying to apply the wisdom of Plato to the desperate case of Rome, hoping in vain to find a way of averting the end that he foresaw too clearly.

That end Plato stated in words of terrible definiteness. 'Excessive freedom is unlikely to pass into anything but excessive slavery, in the case of states as well as individuals. Democracy and only democracy lays the foundation of despotism — that is to say, the most intense freedom lays the foundation of the heaviest and fiercest slavery.' Such a dictum standing alone might mean only an unreasoning academic or aristocratic prejudice, but it is part of a whole theory of political change, the 'cycle' theory adopted by both Polybius and Cicero. It is indeed a question whether Plato himself took the theory as seriously as his successors did. Even in the wonderful eighth book of the *Republic* he is concerned only with the progressive degeneration of an aristocratic state through the stages of timocracy, oligarchy, democracy, and tyranny. In such later dialogues as the *Statesman* and the *Laws*, the 'cycles' disappear and the whole tone of the discussion is less bitter, firmly as he reiterates his conviction as to the ruinous effect of democracy. But it was the prophetic note of the *Republic* that impressed later students of politics, and they saw in it the formulation of an inexorable cause and effect law. Aristotle refused to recognize any such law as his master had set forth. 'Revolutions,' he said, 'are caused by trifles.' Yet behind his almost querulous insistence on exceptions, he too saw something of the great waves of change that had struck Plato.

The whole 'cycle' theory is formulated most definitely by

Polybius.<sup>1</sup> As he sees it, primitive society is apt to be ruled by a despot; despotism evolves — or is restrained — into kingship (as we have it in Homer, for instance), and kingship into tyranny or aristocracy according to which fork of the road is taken; aristocracy is easily perverted into oligarchy; when oligarchy becomes bad enough to arouse revolt, as it is sure to do, there is democracy; democracy becomes ochlocracy or mob-rule, the tyranny of the many; and this brings the disorder and contempt for law that causes reversion to despotism, when the cycle will presumably repeat itself. Each change is good for a time, a kind of fresh start, but each form is fatally open to perversion.

That is to say — reverting to Plato — kingship, aristocracy, and even democracy may all work relatively well while they recognize law, but none of them can endure because they are bound to be destroyed each by its own peculiar form of lawlessness — the passion for power, the passion for wealth, the passion for liberty; or, as a modern American might ruefully add, all three passionately combined. It is a pity, but — using Plato's words again — 'Since everything that has come into being must one day perish, even a system like ours will not endure for all time but must suffer dissolution.' Despotism is that dissolution, and democracy is the ominous sign of its near approach, when every citizen should be on his guard or — if this is vain — seek a safe retreat.

From such a point of view the city that so valiantly faced Persia had that moment reached a fatal turning-point, a maturity that held in its very perfection the certainty of decay and death. Our biological way of regarding history predisposes us to agreement even though the logic and symmetry

<sup>1</sup> *History*, Book VI.

of the cycles tinges our approval with suspicion. Certainly Plato's conviction that the evils of his own generation were directly traceable to the triumph of unrestrained democracy had much to support it. But what he almost saw and could not fully admit, what perhaps no Greek could have admitted, was that his criticism of democracy was a criticism of the city-state itself. Not even Aristotle realized that the city-state was by its very nature the most fragile of political forms, capable indeed of noble energy up to a point, but certain to collapse when it had reached full realization because it was inherently incapable of the transformation that is a first essential of continued growth.

One device might have saved it, the device of federation, and this was tried again and again. It failed in the fifth and fourth centuries because of the arrogance of the more powerful cities, and it failed again in the second century because the world was too fiercely swept by storm for any state to survive unless it was backed by the brute power of concentrated military force. But concentration on any large scale was precisely what the Greeks could not endure, and even their wisest thinkers were never able to see its necessity. For to them the very essence of the state was bound up with its independence, an independence based on a unity of blood and religion that barred all outsiders and made organic combinations with other states unthinkable.

A modern mind is almost helpless before that fatally fixed idea — the sacred unity of blood. Not such unity of blood as is implied in the statements that every German is Teutonic and every member of the British Empire Anglo-Saxon — statements that no one believes and no one is interested in: a unity rather as if someone said that all Americans are

descended from the Pilgrim Fathers, all Englishmen from the companions of Hengest and Horsa, and that if they are not so descended they cannot be truly American or English or worship American or English gods! So stated it becomes grotesque, but that means only that no attempt at a modern parallel is of any use.<sup>1</sup> There was perhaps an approach to it in the South African Republic of Paul Kruger's time, where all not of true Boer blood were Uitlanders. But to this jealous oneness of blood and land-ownership and prior possession was added in Athens — in any Greek city, for that matter — the worship paid to the city's gods, the reverence paid to ancestral tombs, the unbreakable tie between present and past. How could I be part of a city in whose bounds the ashes of my fathers did not rest, whose gods were not my gods?<sup>2</sup>

Now in the older Athens this faith in the racial and religious purity of the city was easy. The facts, if investigated, might disprove it, but no one wanted to investigate. Every step in the advance of democracy made it harder to believe and it was totally irreconcilable with expansion, but faith in it persisted in the face of all reason and all experience. There were no doubt anxious thoughts and passionate oppositions as the franchise was extended, but even in the great assemblies that met in the days of Pericles there was a tacit assumption that every individual of the democracy was descended

<sup>1</sup> Yet one might recall the expression 'one hundred per cent American,' and compare John Richard Green's reference to the isle of Thanet: 'No spot in Britain can be so sacred to Englishmen as that which first felt the tread of English feet.'

<sup>2</sup> See W. S. Ferguson, *Greek Imperialism*, chapter 1, and compare Sir Henry Maine's account of the legal fiction of common descent in Rome (*Ancient Law*, chapter 5).

from free-born Athenians whose ancestors lived in the Attica of Theseus and Kodros. Aristotle tells of the questions that had to be answered by every prospective Athenian magistrate in his own time, i.e., about 325 B.C.—questions obviously of immemorial antiquity: ‘whether the candidate has an Apollo Patroos or ancestral Apollo and a Zeus Herkeios or household Zeus, and where their temples are — whether he has any family tombs and where they are.’ Just as the ‘family altar’ had a specific and literal meaning, so had the larger family altar of the city, where the ghosts of long-dead Athenians were invisibly present with their children, and where the participation of an outsider in the sacrifices would be a profanation more serious than treason.

This interweaving of religion and politics, so alien to our habits of thought, has to be kept in mind if we would understand how great a crisis Athens was unconsciously facing as the fifth century opened. The fiction of common descent, added to the intimate association of ancestors and gods with all city affairs could be preserved so long, and only so long, as the city was a small and compact one.<sup>1</sup> Up to a point it was perfectly compatible with democracy. Democracy was indeed logically and biologically inevitable. But as the city became larger, as newcomers drifted in, as wealth was made the basis of voting power and eligibility to office, the religious foundation of city life and unity was more and more imperiled, more and more obviously out of accord with facts. Solon and Cleisthenes, no matter how wise and right in what they did, were yet unconscious pioneers of a revolution that would

<sup>1</sup> Plato suggested a limit of 5040 citizens (*Laws*, 737). Aristotle thought the best limit to the population of a state to be ‘the largest number which suffices for the purposes of life and can be taken in at a single view.’

undermine the very foundations of the city they were trying to preserve.

For the point is that the Athenian democracy did not rest on any theory of human equality. When we translate the word *demos* into our word *people*, we are apt to read a modern idea into an organism that was not modern at all. The theory was that all *citizens*, being brethren and members — so to speak — of one Church, should be equal. They were of one blood, worshiped at the same altar. But what if this should become obviously and absurdly untrue? And what if Athens not only ceased to be Athenian as outsiders were taken in, but encroached on the independence of other cities just as jealous? As always, the ‘old families’ loved the old traditions that were bound up with the rise of their city to greatness, while the *demos* — having no ancestors — lived in the present and future and trampled arrogantly and ignorantly on the indispensable past. So little by little Plato’s diagnosis was justified. And as the cities were tossed and shaken in the tumults of the fifth century and the worse tumults of the fourth, the question was not whether the new wine poured into the old city-state bottle would break it: that was certain; but whether the Greek genius would survive the collapse of the political form in which it had been nurtured.

Monarchy, aristocracy, tyranny, democracy — and then the deluge. Yet perhaps even if the free men of Athens had had a glimpse of the future when in the summer of 490 they faced the invaders at Marathon, they might have judged the next sixty years worth the price.

## CHAPTER IV

### *The War With Persia*

BEFORE we tell the story of the war with Persia, it is fit and proper that we make our bow to the genial historian to whom we owe most of our knowledge of it — himself an event of the first consequence, for he is the pioneer figure of European prose. Herodotus was born in one of the Asiatic colonies, Halicarnassus, somewhere about the year 484 B.C. — i.e., before the issue of the war was decided — and he was still a child when the Greeks emerged triumphant. He grew up with two outstanding characteristics that are illustrated by every page of his history — an irrepressible curiosity about people and their ways and a gift for telling stories. Not curiosity of the philosophic or scientific sort: he was not hunting for laws or principles, he makes few generalizations, he was usually willing to believe what people told him, and divine interventions were to be accepted as always probable and frequently beyond question. But he had an inquiring mind even if amiably uncritical — inquiry and credulity being perfectly compatible — so he traveled a great deal and asked endless questions about what he saw. Finally he decided to write an account of the war between Greeks and Persians ‘in order that the actions of men might not be effaced by time, nor the great and wondrous deeds displayed by both Greeks and barbarians deprived of renown; and among the rest for what cause they waged war on each other.’

But the cause was, he saw, far from simple. Its roots were

partly the diverse habits of all the nations of the East, past and present — Assyrians and Babylonians, Phoenicians and Egyptians, Medes and Persians, even Scythians and Ethiopians — partly the passions and ambitions of their princes. So beginning with Croesus, King of Lydia, and the rise of Cyrus, he painted with gusto and captivating vividness portrait after portrait, largely through anecdote, and filled in his background with lavish detail, until he had told of the wars and customs and religions and governments of all the seething masses from the Soudan to the Crimea, from the isles of Greece to the vaguely known lands beyond the Persian hills.

How much of it all is precisely true is, of course, open to debate. So breezy and naïve an account is bound to awaken distrust. But Herodotus is honest with his readers nevertheless. When he saw a thing with his own eyes he says so, and the things told him he narrates for what they are worth — often giving two contradictory accounts and bidding you believe what you please. He relied very little, so far as we can tell, on documents or books. Many of his descriptions he could have had from eye-witnesses; sometimes he could and did reconcile conflicting reports by personal surveys of the ground; and for the more distant past he took what was told him by chance acquaintances and officials as he wandered about Asia and Egypt and the Greek cities from Ionia to Italy. All of his vast store of facts and traditions he wove together into one of the most fascinating stories ever written, a prose epic in nine books, each named after one of the nine muses. We of today can select and organize and clarify and now and then verify or deny, but we can never exhaust that amazing treasury, and even if we read it often with more amusement than philosophic seriousness, only the most nar-

rowly severe of scientific historians will refuse to do honor to Herodotus.<sup>1</sup>

What, then, did happen? And how did the great war come about?

Greece and Asia had been intimate neighbors from the beginning by sheer geographic compulsion. Communication was undoubtedly frequent, and in the older heroic legends it is not always easy to set a clear dividing line between Greeks and the peoples of Asia Minor — Phrygians, Carians, Lydians, and Lycians. But the coming of the Achaeans introduced elements that involved a cleavage quite evident in Homer; as time went on the two streams were flowing along visibly different channels; in art, literature, thought, religion, and social life Greek civilization was initiating and developing its own un-Asiatic character. Greece and Chaldaea, Greece and Israel, Egypt, Phœnicia, had indeed innumerable points in common; but the difference between them was fundamental nevertheless, and it was of vital importance to Europe's future that it should remain so.

Just at the threshold of historic times — i.e., times of which we have some written record — we see part of the Greek world coming under political subjection to an Asiatic power. Quite late in the seventh century, about the time when Nineveh fell before the Medes and Babylonians and the terrible empire of Assyria was destroyed forever, the kingdom of Lydia, now the most considerable power of Asia Minor, began to expand her dominions to the seacoast. Here, as we have seen, Greek colonies, Æolian, Dorian, and Ionian,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Professor Bury would not agree with all of these statements; and he may be right! See his *Greek Historians*, chapters 1 and 2.

<sup>2</sup> Just how much racial difference is represented by these names it is

had settled at the mouths of rivers, on the islands, and at commercially strategic points all the way from the Hellespont to Cyprus. And the kings of Lydia, recognizing that an expanding and ambitious empire controlling the interior must for its own safety control the coast also, decided to conquer the Ionian cities. So one by one they were attacked and reduced to dependence.

There is no indication that Lydian rule was particularly tyrannical. The conquerors apparently had little disposition to interfere with the life and doings of the conquered, and even regarded the Greeks with friendly interest and respect. The last king of Lydia, Croesus, is said to have honored Greek wisdom and showered the Delphic oracle with gifts so magnificent that he was made a citizen of Delphi. He certainly contributed to the building of the temple of Artemis at Ephesus. But if there was danger to Hellenism in the friendship between the cosmopolitan but Asiatic Lydians and the Greeks, it was a danger quickly dispelled. For midway in the sixth century Lydia fell before the Medes and Persians, and a new power arose in western Asia that was stronger, more arrogant, less disposed to consider the Greeks as anything but tribes to be conquered, subjects to be ruled.

Media and Babylon had overthrown Nineveh. Cyrus the Persian overthrew them both. And by virtue of his ambition and genius the name of a province of the Median kingdom

hard to say—perhaps no more than the difference between New-Englander and Virginian. There is a difference in dialect, and there were quite marked differences in temperament and mental habit, especially between Ionians and Dorians. The people of Lesbos, like the Thessalians and Boeotians, were Æolians; Delos, Samos, Naxos, Chios, and Miletus—like Athens—were Ionian; the best-known Dorian colonies in Asia were Rhodes and Halicarnassus.

came to signify an empire that extended from the *Ægean* Sea to the borders of India. His son Cambyses added to his dominions the valley of the Nile. And when the third king, the great Darius, ascended the throne, Persia was not simply the chief power in western Asia: it was the only one. The old monarchies of Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, Media, and Lydia, with the rich Phoenician cities of Tyre and Sidon, were no longer rivals, but satrapies of an empire that had absorbed them all.<sup>1</sup>

So great and complex a dominion was not easy to hold. Not only were the conquered states apt to be restless, but any ambitious satrap might consider the possibility of repeating the exploit of Cyrus himself. But on the whole the organization devised by Darius worked as well as any, perhaps better than, say, that of Charlemagne's empire of feudal Germany and France if we judge it by the test of duration and stability. It was based frankly on the theory of absolute despotism, absolute centralization of power.

Unfortunately for the rulers of Persia, however, one small area of the empire was populated not by Asiatics but by people to whom restless liberty was as the breath of life. Miletus, Ephesus, Kolophon, Halicarnassus, Samos, and the rest of the insular or seacoast cities that were conquered by Persia after the fall of Lydia were indifferently adapted to a scheme based on submission to an external power. Their rulers were acute enough to half recognize this, and many of the cities were placed under tyrants of Greek race backed by the Persian power. But it was a situation that only over-

<sup>1</sup> The kingdom was divided by Darius for administrative purposes into from twenty to thirty satrapies or provinces, each governed by a satrap responsible to the king.

whelming force could maintain unless the Greeks should lose their most distinctive racial characteristic — a dislike to any external control, political or spiritual. And before Cyrus had been dead more than thirty years the Ionian cities broke into revolt (about 499 B.C.).

The glory of Athens and the lack of written records have obscured to later ages the genius and achievements of these cities of overseas Hellas. We have no chronicles of their history, no records of their doings except a small but priceless group of lyrics, a few fragments preserved in quotation by later writers, and some descriptive and historical details from alien, perhaps none too friendly, pens. Yet even these show that they nurtured daring sailors, prosperous merchants, and keen observers of life. Herodotus himself was an Asiatic Greek, a citizen of the Dorian city of Halicarnassus, and if the Ionian cities farther north produced no one quite so famous, yet they can show name after name that reflects the glory of a brilliant intellectual life. Miletus alone was the mother of Thales, the first recorded philosopher and astronomer of Europe; Anaximander, mathematician and geographer, maker of the first European map; and Hekataeus, the historical and religious critic who might be said to share with Xenophanes of Kolophon, another Ionian, the honor of being the first 'rationalist.'<sup>1</sup>

If to us, then, the Ionian cities are little more than a memory, yet at the beginning of the fifth century Miletus was a greater city than Athens. And there is no reason to suppose that she or her associates lacked either firmness or courage. The fact that they endured a conflict of six years with the might of Persia is direct evidence to the contrary. The ruin

<sup>1</sup> Thales and Xenophanes are discussed more explicitly in Chapter VI.

of the Ionians may well have been due not, as Herodotus, a Dorian and an unfriendly critic, would have us believe, to cowardice and weakness in the ordinary sense, but to characteristics that they shared with the whole Greek race — restlessness, inability to form a permanent and coherent union, and refusal to submit to any political control.

The only chance for Ionian success lay in the distance of Susa, the capital of Darius, from the scene of action — about fifteen hundred miles, or three months' journey — and in the possibility of aid from the independent Greek cities. But Sparta, cautious as always, regarded the revolt as hopeless and refused any aid whatever. Athens, exasperated by a recent demand from Darius that she restore to power the exiled tyrant Hippias, promised aid; but she sent only twenty ships, enough to give vent to her wrath, no doubt, but hardly enough to be of any great assistance. Athenians and Ionians combined in an attack on Sardis, the ancient capital of Lydia and now the chief city of the province. But it was only half successful, and a reverse seems to have followed at Ephesus. At any rate, the Athenians, convinced apparently after closer inspection that the enterprise was doomed to failure, broke the alliance and sailed for home.

It took some six years to crush the revolt. The final terms were not unmerciful, but Miletus, the heart of the rebellion, was destroyed utterly, and the permanent subjection of the other Ionian cities seemed to be assured. This, however, by no means, ended the matter. The attention of Darius had been called to the danger of having free peoples just beyond his border who were allied to subjects just within it. If Athens had done little for the Ionians, she had done just enough to draw down on herself and perhaps on the other

Greek cities the wrath of the Great King. For it was the kind of thing that Darius could neither ignore nor forget. All that we know of him assures us that he was not interested in conquest for its own sake, but in welding together into a firm and peaceful whole the far-flung dominions that Cyrus had gathered under his rule. Yet further conquest is sometimes necessary to ensure safety. And Greece would seem to him a clear case in point, especially as he had no reason to think that the undertaking would be a difficult one.

First, however, it was necessary to reduce the country lying immediately beyond the Hellespont, say between the *Ægean* and the Danube, between the Hellespont and the borders of Thessaly. This was done in the year 492 b.c. by a great army and fleet under Mardonius. It is likely enough, as Herodotus declares, that he had intended to take his army right on through Macedon and Thessaly to Athens. But the campaign proved more difficult than was anticipated. Thrace and Macedon with the island of Thasos were conquered. Then the fleet met with disaster in a great storm off Mount Athos. So Mardonius returned, having spied out the road and paved it as far as the borders of Thessaly.

The expedition of Mardonius had perhaps convinced Darius that the conquest of all Hellas was going to be a difficult and slow business. At any rate, he resolved now on a direct blow at the city that had defied his majesty — the cities, rather, for Eretria, a little town of Eubœa, had joined Athens in rendering aid to the Ionians. Eretria he would destroy. Athens he would punish and then deliver over to the tyrant Hippias, who in his exile had taken refuge at the court of Susa.

In 490 b.c. the Persian fleet, carrying an army sufficient, it was thought, for the purpose, set sail and headed for Athens.

On the way Eretria was destroyed and its inhabitants enslaved. It has been suggested that the severity of the punishment meted out to Eretria may have cooled the partisanship of those in Athens who were intriguing for the restoration of Hippias and had been planning the betrayal of the city to the Persians. That there was such a party seems unquestionable, and it throws a sinister light on the unscrupulous party spirit that was ultimately to be the main cause of the ruin of Greece. But it is equally certain that the plot amounted to nothing. And it may well be that the destruction of Eretria had something to do with this. It was one thing to desire the return of Hippias, quite another to risk the blotting out of Athens.

It must have been the expectation of aid from within the city that led the Persian fleet to aim for the little coast plain of Marathon, twenty-four miles from Athens, rather than directly for the Peiræus or Phaleron. Herodotus tells us that the Persians wished simply to remain within striking distance until the glimmer of a shield on a hilltop visible from Marathon should inform the invaders that all was ready. Certainly to Marathon they went, and all or most of the army was disembarked to encamp and await the signal.

If the immediate danger was to Athens, all Greece was really involved. So — but Herodotus tells it far better than we can:

While the generals were yet in the city, they despatched a herald to Sparta, one Pheidippides, an Athenian who was a courier by profession. This man, then, as Pheidippides himself reported to the Athenians, Pan<sup>1</sup> met near Mount

<sup>1</sup> A grotesque nature god, not one of the Olympians, worshiped everywhere on mountain-tops, in caves and in the woods. His power of inspiring unreasoning (*panic*) terror made him a useful ally.

Parthenion, above Tegea; and Pan, calling out the name of Pheidippides, bade him ask the Athenians why they paid no attention to him, who was well inclined to the Athenians, and had often been useful to them, and would be so hereafter. The Athenians, therefore, erected a temple to Pan beneath the Acropolis, and in consequence of that message they propitiate Pan with yearly sacrifices and a torch race. Pheidippides arrived in Sparta on the following day after his departure from the city of the Athenians, and on coming into the presence of the magistrates, he said: ‘Lacedæmonians, the Athenians entreat you to assist them, and not to suffer the most ancient city among the Greeks to fall into bondage to barbarians; for Eretria is already reduced to slavery, and Greece is become weaker by the loss of a renowned city.’ He accordingly delivered the message according to his instructions, and they resolved indeed to assist the Athenians; but it was out of their power to do so immediately, as they were unwilling to violate the law: for it was the ninth day of the current month; and they said they could not march out on the ninth day, the moon’s circle not being full. They, therefore, waited for the full moon.

But the Athenians could not wait. At the news of the landing, an army of ten thousand men under the ten generals (*strategoi*) and the polemarch (commander-in-chief) was rushed over the hills to a point overlooking the plain of Marathon. And here the plan of action was debated until the proposal was adopted that made the name of Miltiades, the ablest and most experienced of the ten generals, famous for all time. The author of the plan was not nominally put in command, but when his tactics were accepted he seems to have been given by the council of war a free hand in carrying them out. They were apparently of the simplest kind — a quick and desperate offensive at the first opportunity. Fortune helped

the Athenians, no doubt. The Persians were waiting for the signal, but it did not come, so after some days they decided to delay no longer but break camp. It was when their embarkation was well under way, with its unavoidable confusion, the invading force divided between the ships and shore, that they suddenly had to face the unexpected onset of the Greeks. The charge, on foot and at ‘double-quick,’ was irresistible, and the result was a complete victory for Miltiades. So staggering and disheartening was the blow that when the fleet, still carrying the greater part of the Persian army, sailed round the Cape of Sunium only to find that the force of Miltiades by a rapid march had reached Athens and was ready to renew the battle, the courage of the leaders failed them. They hesitated, realized that they had been checkmated, and sailed back to Asia. The victory of Marathon had saved Athens and perhaps all Greece.

The day after the battle a Spartan army arrived, only to find the victory won and the enemy in retreat. They viewed the battlefield, strewn still with the dead, and returned home. News of the great event spread rapidly through Greece, and men looked with new eyes on the city, hitherto with no great military reputation, that had dared almost alone to meet the host of Persia. The achievement was no doubt exaggerated, and there is every sign that Marathon became in time almost a myth; but even so the Athenians had every right to the pride that swelled their bosoms. The victory was hardly decisive in any ultimate sense, for the Persian attack was renewed with far greater fury ten years later. But in so far as it saved Athens and made possible the splendor of the next three generations, it was one of the notable landmarks of European history and deserves its fame.

Darius showed no inclination to accept the failure of the expedition as final. He simply recognized that the punishment of the Athenians was a more formidable task than he had supposed. Evidently it would involve the full putting forth of the empire's strength, and the crushing not merely of Athens but of all the Greeks. To this end he proceeded to bend his efforts. But he was delayed by the revolt of Egypt. The suppression of the Egyptians was even more important than the conquest of Greece, and before it was completed the great king died. His son Xerxes succeeded to the throne (485 b.c.) and to the carrying out of the two military enterprises that Darius had left him. The Egyptian revolt was crushed in the following year, and there remained the invasion and conquest of Greece. But distances were great; the assembly and equipment of the army took time; and it was only in the spring of 480 b.c. that all was ready.

In the meantime only one counter-preparation had taken place in Greece — the building of a really great Athenian navy. And this was due mainly to the genius of one man — Themistocles. His rise to a prominent position in Athenian politics may have begun even before Marathon. But the first time that we can be sure of his rising power occurred when in 484 b.c. a question arose in Athens as to the disposition of a large and unexpected increase in the city's resources. One of the officers in charge of the state silver mines at Laurion tried the experiment of sinking his shafts to a deeper level than had been customary. At three hundred feet he came upon ore far richer than any yet worked, and the result was a notable upward leap in the revenues. It was suggested by some that the new wealth be simply divided among the citizens. But Themistocles suggested and carried

the proposal that the money be spent in building two hundred new ships for the navy. Whether or not he saw how the new sea power would serve Athens and Greece in the near future, we can only guess. But it is a practical certainty, no guess, that as matters turned out his action quite determined the question of victory or defeat.

Signs of the coming storm were already visible in the year 481 B.C. As in the year of Marathon, ambassadors were sent to the Greek states — except Athens and Sparta — demanding submission to Persia by the usual signs, earth and water. Many yielded, some at once and some later on when the immense size of the invading host became known. But southern Greece remained fairly solid in its decision to resist, while in the north, although Athens and her ally Platæa were perhaps the only cities of which there was no question, yet Boeotia was at least divided and Thessaly was for the moment uncertain. Altogether a goodly proportion of the Hellenes sent delegates to the Council that was formed with headquarters at the Isthmus to heal all discords and to ensure united action under the leadership of Sparta. Outlying states like Syracuse, Corcyra, and the cities of Crete were asked for aid. But Syracuse had to face impending invasion from Carthage — perhaps a result of Persian diplomacy in view of the blood tie between Xerxes' Phœnician subjects and the Carthaginians — Corcyra preferred the safe course of neutrality, and Crete was rendered timid by the pessimistic utterances of the Delphic oracle. For though the oracle had a change of heart later on, its first pronouncement at this crisis was anything but encouraging.

Xerxes had reverted to the strategy adopted in 492 — a march through Thrace and Macedon, down through Thessaly

d so to Athens, a great fleet sailing along the coast and keeping in touch with the army. Herodotus gives twelve hundred ships and a million and a half soldiers as the total Persian force, but we need not take these figures too seriously. It was evidently regarded as an immense and perhaps irresistible host, and the question of defense was naturally an acute one. Should resistance be made at Tempe, at Thermopylæ, or at the Isthmus? At first sight one would say Tempe, the best-known pass from the north into Thessaly, and as a matter of fact a force was sent there. But it was found that the position could be turned by way of other passes, and the army withdrew — its withdrawal involving necessity the submission of Thessaly to Xerxes. To make a great defense at the Isthmus would be to abandon Athens and all northern Greece — a thing that Sparta and the Peloponnesians might view with complacency, but would hardly insist on. Indeed such a scheme could not be made effective, for Athens could not possibly consent except as a last resort to a plan that meant the loss of the city, and a fleet was essential on that plan or any other to the blocking of the immense naval force of Persia. There remained, then, the chance of checking the Persians at Thermopylæ, and this it was decided to try. At the same time preparations were made to hold the Euripos, the channel between Eubœa and the mainland. It was obvious that a land and sea attack must be met by a land and sea defense. The fleet at Artemisium was the natural complement to the army at Thermopylæ. Thermopylæ, on the coast road from Thessaly and Malis to Locris, between Mount Æta and the sea, is the inevitable gateway of Greece from the north. Except by sea no invader could win through to Phocis, Boöotia, Attica, and the Peloponnesus.

ponnese who did not enter by this pass. There are other roads, indeed, but none passable by an army. For while Oeta is not so high as some other ranges in Greece (from about 3000 to 6500 feet), it is peculiarly rugged, and even at its lowest levels it may be crossed only by narrow and exhausting mountain trails. Judging only by the map the range of Othrys, the southern boundary of Thessaly, is as formidable as Oeta. But Othrys may be crossed by several roads. Xerxes used two of them, and had these been defended he could have used still others. From Malis on, however, there is only one highway available for an army of any size, that which winds along the coast between Oeta and the sea. On this road Thermopylæ is the obvious point for defense. Here the mountains leave a narrow road between the cliffs and the Malian Gulf. In the fifth century B.C. the sea evidently came up to the road, where there is now an impassable marsh.<sup>1</sup>

The puzzle is not that the allied Greeks should have chosen to defend Thermopylæ, but that they should have sent to its defense so small an army. The Spartan king Leonidas with a force of less than eight thousand men — including only three hundred Spartan hoplites (heavy armed infantry) — was sent to hold it against the Persian myriads, while the greater part of the Peloponnesian army was held at the Isthmus. If it was caution it was the kind of caution

<sup>1</sup> Herodotus, who apparently knew the spot from personal investigation, says that Persian soldiers were forced from the road into the sea during the battle and drowned. And in the invasion of the Gauls a century later, the Athenian ships came close enough to shore to aid in defense of the pass. The Gauls had no fleet to hinder this. See Grundy, *The Great Persian War*, by far the best book on the subject, a commentary on Herodotus by a careful and critical scholar who went over the ground himself.

that was worse than rashness. Sparta's given reason — quite probably her real reason — was that a religious feast was being held. When it should be over, her whole army was to march at once. But the swift movement of events paid little regard to Sparta and her feasts. That Thermopylæ could have been held and the invasion checked seems almost certain. Leonidas almost did it even with a handful of Phocians, Boëotians, Locrians, and Peloponnesians, stiffened by his little band of Spartans. Fighting in the narrow way, where the superior number of the enemy was of no avail, they held the pass for three days with but little loss. The chances are that they could have held it indefinitely if they had had even a few thousand more men.

As it was, they failed. Leonidas was aware of a road, useless indeed as a highway for the whole invading army, but quite available for a comparatively small force, by which his position could be turned. Sure as he was that Xerxes would not know of it, the Spartan king yet detached a thousand Phocians to guard it. But a Greek of Malis, hoping for a great reward, disclosed the road to the Persians. A capable officer, Hydarnes, was sent with a body of picked troops to attack Leonidas in the rear. Even then, had the Phocians done their duty, there was no great danger. But they were surprised and swept aside after little or no resistance, and the Persians passed on. Word was brought to Leonidas of their approach, and just what happened then is doubtful. We know that the Greek force was divided, and according to tradition the greater portion of the army either withdrew or was sent home by Leonidas. But Herodotus admits doubt as to the real truth, and it has been suggested that this force was really detached to hold Hydarnes back. This apparently

could still have been done, and if so the battle was not yet lost. But whether treachery was at work, or cowardice, or mere misunderstanding, or whether something happened that we cannot even guess at, Hydarnes reached the pass unresisted. Leonidas was caught in a trap.

The Greek leader now had left perhaps two to three thousand men, all told, counting the Helots and *perioikoi* that accompanied the three hundred Spartans,<sup>1</sup> seven hundred men from Thespiae in Bœotia, and four hundred Thebans. They had to choose between death and surrender, for victory had become impossible. The Thebans took the first opportunity to surrender. The remainder of the army fought to the death, dashing themselves furiously against the oncoming host until Hydarnes arrived and then taking their stand on a hillock until all had perished. Their fame is indeed immortal; they had done their part so nobly and valiantly that no shred of responsibility for failure can be attached to either Leonidas or the men who died with him. But the inexcusable blunder that placed an insufficient force at the one supremely important point of defense, and the carelessness or cowardice of subordinate officers at a time when every man's full strength of mind and arm was needed, had caused a catastrophe that almost spelled irremediable ruin for Greece.

In the meantime the fleet at Artemisium had done its work well. Had it not been there, or had it retired, Thermopylæ would have been, of course, untenable. The Persian fleet could have simply landed a force in the rear of Leonidas and ended the resistance at once. To prevent this was the duty of

<sup>1</sup> The true Spartans were usually supported by light armed Helots (serfs) and by soldiers levied from the unfranchised population of the territory ruled by Sparta, Lakonia, and Messenia, the *perioikoi*, dwellers roundabout.

the Greek ships, and prevent it they did. Poseidon indeed helped them. Four hundred of the Persian ships are said to have been caught in an unprotected anchorage and wrecked by a violent storm.<sup>1</sup> A detachment of two hundred vessels which was sent round to Eubœa to come up the straits and catch the Greeks in a trap was completely destroyed by a second storm. But the allies were still outnumbered, and barely held their own in a pitched battle extending over parts of three days. It is difficult for us to know, with our scanty evidence, which side did the greater damage to the other; yet it seems clear that the Greeks still held the entrance to the straits when news came of the disaster of Thermopylæ. Then the Greek fleet returned from a position that was no longer worth contesting.

The way south was now clear to the invader. At one point resistance could have been offered — where the traversable road narrows to a ribbon a few miles wide between Mount Helicon and Lake Kopais in Boeotia. It was here that the Greek patriots a hundred and fifty years later made their last stand against Philip of Macedon. But the weight of Sparta's reluctance to fight any longer north of the Isthmus was too strong. Xerxes was permitted a clear right of way. Boeotia submitted, and thereafter Thebans fought in the Persian army, not against it. A detachment was sent to Delphi to seize the immense treasure there, but Apollo, it was said, showered great rocks on the would-be profaners of his oracle, and the enterprise failed.

Delphi had at first been of little support to the cause of

<sup>1</sup> 'But at length the Magi, having sacrificed victims and endeavored to charm the winds by incantations and having offered sacrifices to Thetis and the Nereids, laid the storm on the fourth day; or perhaps it abated of its own accord.' (Herodotus, vii, 193.)

Hellas. The usually well-informed group of priests that controlled the oracle had been too deeply impressed by the might of Persia and had practically advised non-resistance, bidding the Athenians forsake their city and flee to the ends of the earth. But the god, on a further appeal, repented his faint-heartedness, and in a cautiously worded response had advised the Athenians this time to trust to their wooden walls.

This advice was taken. The non-combatants of Athens were transferred to points of comparative safety at Ægina and Trœzen. A force remained to defend the Acropolis, apparently, but the majority of the fighting men went on board the ships. Athens was soon in the hands of Xerxes. The city was burned. The Acropolis was stormed and the temples were given to the flames. Only a desperate hope remained to the Athenians that they might retrieve the broken fortunes of their country at sea.

To this end Themistocles, their great leader, played with all his genius a desperate move. The Greek fleet was in the bay of Eleusis, between the island of Salamis and the mainland. There were two narrow entrances, one on the side of Attica and one at the Isthmus. If the battle were forced in one of these straits, the inequality of numbers might be rectified, for the Greek ships were at least as well manned and equipped as their opponents, and might be trusted to hold their own provided they were not overwhelmed by the multitude of the enemy. The danger was that the Persians might simply guard the entrance to the bay, and, leaving the Greek fleet cooped up there, make a landing on the Peloponnesian shore, carry the war into southern Greece, and refuse to attack the strong position of the Spartans on the Isthmus. The problem of

Themistocles lay in making the Persian fleet fight in the place that he had chosen.

He resorted to a daring ruse. He sent a message to Xerxes over his own name, informing the king that the counsels of the Greeks were divided, that they were considering (as was very likely the case) an escape from their present anchorage, and that if he intended to capture or destroy the fleet he must attack at once. Such a move exposed the Athenian leader to a charge of treason in case of failure; only success could justify it; but he was probably right in thinking that he was taking the one method by which Athens could be redeemed and Greece saved. Even so, he was barely able to avert the departure of the Peloponnesian ships before his scheme was consummated, by the threat that if the Athenians were now deserted they would depart in a body and sail to found a new home in Italy. The loss of two hundred ships could not be faced with complacency; the threat at least delayed the impending division of the fleet; and the council of war at which the matter was being debated had perhaps hardly adjourned when the success of the ruse made further discussion unavailing. For Xerxes had taken the bait, and by nightfall of the day on which he had received the message the straits were blocked and the Persians were preparing to seize their prey on the morrow.

The Greek leaders had been moved by a real difference of opinion in a desperate situation, not by cowardice. As soon as they heard of the movements of the enemy and realized that battle was inevitable, all discussion ceased. When morning dawned the Persian fleet, having blocked the western strait, moved to the attack on the eastern side under the

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eye of Xerxes himself. The battle was fought in a channel less than a mile wide, compelling the Persians to shorten their front line and meet the Greeks with an equal number of ships.

The fight has been described by an eye-witness. The poet Æschylus was himself serving on an Athenian ship, and in his drama of *The Persians* he puts an account of the battle into the mouth of a Persian. It is hardly worth while to paraphrase his narrative when we may take his words as they stand, or at any rate as nearly so as translation will permit. The lines immediately preceding those quoted tell how the Persians were patrolling the straits to prevent the escape of the Greeks.<sup>1</sup>

Night passed; yet never did the host of Hellenes  
At any point attempt their stolen sally;  
Until at length, when day with her white steeds  
Forth shining held the whole world under sway,  
First from the Hellenes with a loud clear cry  
Song-like, a shout made music, and therewith  
The echo of the rocky isle rang back  
Shrill triumph; but the vast barbarian host  
Shorn of their hope trembled; for not for flight  
The Hellenes hymned their solemn paean then —  
Nay, rather as for battle with stout heart.  
Then too the trumpet speaking fired our foes,  
And with a sudden rush of oars in time  
They smote the deep sea at that clarion cry;  
And in a moment you might see them all.  
The right wing in due order well arrayed  
First took the lead; then came the serried squadron  
Swelling against us, and from many voices

<sup>1</sup> For this extract I use J. A. Symonds's translation in his essay on Athens, in *Sketches in Italy and Greece*.

One cry arose: ‘ Ho! Sons of Hellas, up!  
Now free your fatherland, now free your sons,  
Your wives, the fanes of your ancestral gods,  
Your fathers’ tombs! Now fight you for your all!’  
Yea, and from our side brake an answering hum  
Of Persian voices. Then, no more delay,  
Ship after ship of biting brass  
Struck stoutly....

At first the torrent of the Persian navy  
Bore up: but when the multitude of ships  
Were straitly jammed, and none could help another,  
Huddling with brazen-mouthed beaks they clashed  
And brake their serried banks of oars together;  
Nor were the Hellenes slow or slack to muster  
And pound in a circle. Then ship’s hulks  
Floated keel upwards, and the sea was covered  
With shipwreck multitudinous and with slaughter.  
The shores and jutting reefs were full of corpses.  
In indiscriminate rout, with straining oar,  
The whole barbarian navy turned and fled.

Then Xerxes groaned, seeing the gulf unclose  
Of grief below him; for his throne was raised  
High in the sight of all by the seashore.

Whether the disaster could have been retrieved or not is a question. The king still had an army immensely superior in number to the Greeks, and the fleet, while badly shattered, was by no means destroyed. But the position of the invaders was a serious one. The Greek fleet practically commanded the sea. The huge army of Asiatics was far from home, in a country whose food resources would soon be exhausted, with a terrifying possibility that vigorous action on the part of the Hellenes might at any moment cut off supplies from overseas. Moreover, the further possibility had to be faced

that the Greek fleet might cross the *Æ*gean and block the return passage of the Persians at the Hellespont. At all events, the bolt of Xerxes had been sped, and sped to no purpose. He had destroyed Athens and subjugated northern Greece. Without the aid of his fleet he could do no more, and was face to face with the probable loss of all he had won, even with possible ruin.

He decided to return to Persia, saving appearances by leaving a powerful force in Greece under Mardonius. Thus it might appear at home that he had achieved a conquest and that Mardonius was remaining to complete and consolidate what the king had triumphantly begun. There was even a chance that this might come true.

So the invaders withdrew from the wrecked city and moved sullenly to the north. The remnants of the fleet sailed for Asia. Mardonius and his army settled for the winter in Thessaly. The king got safely through to Susa. Of the rest of the mighty host some reached home after a perilous march through hostile country, but the greater part perished by starvation or at the hands of the wild tribesmen of Thrace.

In the spring of 479 b.c. Mardonius moved south and again occupied Athens, the Athenians retreating to their ships as before. But this time the Greeks faced their enemy with a new confidence born of their victory of the year before. Sparta, for the first time during the war, at last took the share that her military strength and prestige gave her allies the right to expect. A force of fifty thousand men, including heavy-armed Spartans and *perioikoi* and light-armed Helots, marched north under Pausanias and were joined in Boeotia by the other Peloponnesian contingents and by eight thou-

sand Athenians. On the news of the gathering of the Greek army, Mardonius left Athens and marched through the passes of Mount Cithæron to Boeotia. There, near Platæa, the matter was fought out. By a narrow margin the Greeks were victorious, the valor, the discipline, and the heavy armor of the Spartan hoplites deciding the issue. Mardonius fell on the field, and when the remnant of the Persian army began its long retreat to the Hellespont the war was over. On the same day, according to tradition, the Greek fleet won a crushing victory over the Persians at Cape Mycale near Samos. Platæa had ensured the independence of the Greek cities of the mainland. Mycale ended all hopes of Persian domination over the Ægean and its islands. And the completeness of the turning of the tide was evident when the victorious Hellenes proceeded to the attack and capture of Sestos on the Hellespont. Greece was at last free from the fear of Persia. She had met the attack of the most formidable power in the known world and had emerged triumphant from the crisis.

## CHAPTER V

### *How the Greek Mind Found Itself: The Sense for Form*

WHEN the tide of Asiatic invasion was rolled back at Marathon and again at Salamis and Platæa, the Greeks were fighting for their independence. So far they did only as Thracians and Scythians had done before them and as many peoples were to do after them. In such a struggle we have ordinarily the comparatively casual and human interest that comes from our sympathy with courage and our vague belief that government, to be justified, should rest on the consent of the governed. But our interest in Marathon and Platæa has in it something deeper and more personal. The safety of the Greeks was ours. It was of overwhelming importance to future generations that Greek freedom should be preserved. Greek life at the time of the Persian wars had come to be something unique, pulsing with tremendous and immortal power. The Hellenes were working out their own answer to the riddle of existence, an answer so noble, so profound, so many-sided and yet so luminously simple, that it was to inaugurate a new era in human history, to give aim, vitality, and meaning to what we call western civilization.

So before going on with the story of Athens through the century of ambition and achievement that followed Salamis, we must look back to see what had been going on outside the absorbing realm of politics. We have already seen in the epic poets signs of a Greek ‘attitude to life’ very different from anything visible in Asia or Egypt. We must now trace

its development to fuller consciousness and its application in the fields of athletics, lyric poetry, the drama, ethics, religion, science, and art. Clear, conscious vision did not come until the days of Sophocles and Praxiteles, of Plato and Aristotle. But nevertheless one may see it growing clearer, surer, more and more penetrating and radiant from the age of Homer to that of Pindar and *Aeschylus*.

Of the characteristics of the early Greeks as we have seen them in Homer and Hesiod, four may be noted as equally characteristic of the race in later ages, however forms might change. One was the intense individualism that found expression alike in the outspoken fearlessness of Diomedes and Achilles and in the restless curiosity of Odysseus, and was to appear later on in the democracy of Athens and the bold speculations of the philosophers. A second was delight in physical excellence and in competitive exercises of strength and skill. A third was love of beauty and capacity for artistic expression, whether in gold or bronze, in lyric song or in hexameters. And a fourth was moral, a striving — not very successful, often grotesque, yet still evident and sometimes wonderfully keen — to find a rational and permanent basis for right conduct and to see in the gods Powers that on the whole made for righteousness. Of these we have partly told the story of the first already, and it will be illustrated further in every succeeding chapter. It is time now to give specific attention to the other three. Athletics, lyric poetry, and the rise of the drama can be taken together to show the slow but steady and unerring development of a sense for form which is fundamental in the understanding both of Greek philosophy and Greek art. Then we must trace the growth of a higher and purer standard of morality, a finer and more ra-

tional religion, a scientific movement that was both skeptical and constructive, and the rapid flowering of an art that was consistent with all of these.

No episode of the *Iliad* is more famous or more significant than the funeral of Patroclus. In no way could Achilles better honor the shade of his friend than by a festival of athletic sports. Not even in victorious battle did the heroes show more intense pride and enthusiasm than in their contests in wrestling, boxing, running, and throwing the discus. And dancing was a fine art. Alcinous, the royal host of Odysseus, was eager to show his guest the skill of the Phæacians in ‘divers games, that the stranger may tell his friends, when home he returneth, how greatly we excel all men in boxing and wrestling and leaping and speed of foot,’ and when these games were followed by an exhibition of dancing Odysseus marveled in spirit and ‘spake unto Alcinous: “my lord Alcinous, most notable among all the people, thou didst boast thy dancers to be the best in the world, and lo, thy words are fulfilled; I wonder as I look at them.”’

This enthusiasm for physical grace, strength, and skill is no less characteristic of the Greeks of later time, from the heroic age to the age of Plato and Aristotle. It was to them a passion, a religion. No people of whom we have record viewed physical excellence quite as the Greeks did. As the Mohammedans based their chronology on the flight of the prophet, the Christians on the birth of Christ, the Romans on the founding of the city, so the Greeks came to date all events from the first Olympic festival in 776 B.C.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The games were held every four years, the four-year period making an Olympiad. Thus Marathon was fought in the second year of the seventy-first Olympiad and the last festival was in the first year of the two hundred and ninety-third — A.D. 393 in our era.

At first the only contest was the foot-race. In the eighteenth Olympiad (i.e., before the end of the eighth century) this was supplemented by the *Pentathlon* — jumping, running, throwing the discus, casting the javelin, and wrestling — and a little later by boxing and the chariot race. The whole festival was celebrated in honor of Zeus, and was protected by a sacred truce backed by the public opinion and armed force of every Greek state from Asia Minor to Sicily. Victory in an Olympic contest meant glory not only for the successful athlete but for his city, and simple as was the immediate reward — a wreath of wild olive — the honors accorded were such as were given for no other achievement. A triumphal entry into his city, a seat of honor in the theater, the privilege of a statue in Olympia, and a fame that lived in his family and city — often indeed throughout Hellas — for generations, were the prize of the victorious wrestler or runner. And this was no exaltation of brute strength — the contests requiring activity and skill were always valued beyond those requiring only strength. It was bodily excellence in its fullest sense that was honored and idealized in the great games. Little less illustrious than the Olympic festival were the Pythian games at Delphi in honor of Apollo, the Nemean near the Argive city of Cleonæ in honor of Zeus, and the games in honor of Poseidon held on the Isthmus of Corinth. The same rules and ideals were attached to all, except that in the Pythian, Nemean, and Isthmian games there was a musical contest as well as those in athletics.

A single incident of later days may perhaps illustrate better than any extended discussion just what athletic excellence meant to the Greeks. During the fiercest period of the Peloponnesian War, when capture by the enemy meant

certain death, a Spartan ship was taken by the Athenians. Among the captives was one Dorieus of Rhodes. Now Dorieus was not only himself a famous athlete, but he was the grandson of the Diagoras of Rhodes for whom Pindar had written the seventh Olympian ode, the victor in the boxing contest at Olympia in 464. The great ode had been written in letters of gold and placed in the temple of Lindos, one of the three great cities of Rhodes. Diagoras had won victories, Pindar himself tells us, at the Isthmus, at Nemea, at Athens, at Thebes, at Argos, at Ægina, and at Megara as well as at Olympia, and his name had been heralded throughout Greece. Now, more than fifty years after the triumphs of Diagoras, the captors of his grandson discovered whom they had taken. At once they released him, treated him with every mark of respect, and sent him back to his city. All the passions of a desperate and merciless war yielded to the magic of the name of one whom Athenians as well as Spartans delighted to honor. In the field of athletics all Hellenes were citizens of one city, and the sacred truce of Olympia held good when all other laws, divine and human, were trampled in the dust.<sup>1</sup> Strange to a modern, but significant if he wishes to understand the Greeks, is the eloquent description of the supremely happy man in the tenth Pythian ode of Pindar:

That man is happy and song-worthy by the skilled who victorious by might of hand or vigor of foot achieves the greatest prizes with daring and with strength; and who in his lifetime sees his son, while yet a boy, crowned happily with Pythian wreaths. The brazen heaven, it is true, is inaccessible to him; but whatsoever joys we race of mortals touch, he reaches to the farthest voyage.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Myers's note on Olymp. vii in his *Odes of Pindar*.

<sup>2</sup> Translation, J. A. Symonds, *Greek Poets*, i, 357.

The record of lyrical poetry is of necessity much more subtle and complex than athletics. But its interpretation of the Greek spirit is as fascinating and significant as it is elusive. We have no Greek songs that we can be sure are earlier than the beginning of the seventh century,<sup>1</sup> and it is probably safe to say that lyric poetry did not begin to be really significant until the great period of the epic had drawn to a close. When it did make its appearance as a fine art it leaped at once to a high level, and Homer himself hardly meant more to an Athenian of the age of Plato than did Archilochus and Simonides. More reflective, more analytic, more introspective, interpreting with infinitely more subtlety, delicacy, and range the passions, emotions, and aspirations of the individual soul than could any purely narrative or didactic poetry, the lyrics belonged to a different age and responded to a different need. The long roll of Greek singers begins with the names of Callinus and Archilochus, and ends with that of Theocritus. The fragments that are left to us reflect every emotion that could have meaning to a Greek soul, and the lyrical record of passion and hope ceased only when that soul had grown numb and cold under the dead hand of an alien rule.

The student who approaches Greek lyrical poetry<sup>2</sup> with

<sup>1</sup> Archilochus flourished about 700 b.c., and Tyrtaeus, Terpander, and Alcman perhaps a little later. Sappho and Alcaeus and Stesichorus belong to the late seventh century and early sixth. Simonides flourished c. 566–467, Bacchylides c. 500–430, Theognis c. 570–490, and Pindar c. 522–443. Theocritus comes much later, c. 315 to c. 260, a great singer flashing out unexpectedly long after the great creative age of his race was over.

<sup>2</sup> The standard collection of *Greek Lyric Poetry* is that of Bergk, *Poetae Lyrici Græci*. The surviving melic poetry is given in Farnell, *Greek Lyric Poetry*, and an excellent selection with English prose transla-

the supposition that it can hardly be very dissimilar from, say, English lyrical poetry, since men's passions, joys, and sorrows are fundamentally human and universal, will meet with a shock, and one that is profoundly significant. This is, briefly, the discovery of what *form* meant to a Greek. He finds first that he must make a radical distinction between elegiac, iambic, and melic<sup>1</sup> poetry. Then he finds that a complex further classification is necessary, complex but by no means chaotic, springing from a conviction regarding the rigid relation of subject to form to which it is not easy to find a modern parallel. Greek lyric poetry, with all its intensity of feeling, was essentially formal and occasional, and it would have been a daring singer indeed who would venture to apply to one occasion a form appropriate to another. 'From Olympus down to the wandering minstrel every rank and degree of the Greek community, divine or human, had its own proper allotment of poetical celebration. The gods had their hymns, nomes, pæans, dithyrambs; great men their encomia and epinicia; the votaries of pleasure their erotica and symposiaca; the mourner his threnodia and elegies; the vine-dresser his epilenici; the herdsmen their bucolica; even the beggar his eiresioni and chelidonisma.'<sup>2</sup>

tion in Brooks, *Greek Lyric Poets*. The best critical, historical, and appreciative accounts of the lyric poets will be found in Croiset, *Histoire de la Littérature Grecque*, II; Farnell, *Greek Lyric Poetry* (prefatory articles and introductions); Symonds, *Greek Poets*, I; and MacKail, *Lectures on Greek Poetry* (for Sappho and Simonides). For convenience the quotations here given are almost invariably from Brooks. As to Pindar the best translation is Myers's; the best account of him is Croiset, *La Poesie de Pindare*; and the best account in English is contained in R. C. Jebb, *Lectures and Essays*.

<sup>1</sup> From the same root as our 'melody'; poetry made to be sung, not declaimed or chanted.

<sup>2</sup> Mure's *History of Greek Literature*, quoted by Farnell, *Greek Lyric*

This implies no lack of spontaneity. It was simply the result of a keen and sensitive ear and an inborn passion for beautiful and appropriate form. Beauty without appropriateness was not beauty. One questions indeed whether the two words are not almost synonymous as applied to Greek poetry and art, expressions of the same essential quality viewed from two points of view. Any new device, metrical or other, was legitimate and welcome if it made the poetic form more flexible, more perfectly responsive to the thought or play of emotions that it was designed to express, but not otherwise.

Nothing is more curious and interesting to a modern in such a history of music<sup>1</sup> as that given by Plutarch than the fact that every name is associated with special forms. ‘Now Thaletas, Xenodamus, and Xenocritus, and their scholars, were poets that addicted themselves altogether to the making of pæans; Polymnestus was all for the Orthian or military strain, and Sacadas for elegies. Others... affirm Xenodamus to have been a maker of songs for dances (*hyporchemes*) and not of pæans; and a tune of Xenodamus is preserved which plainly appears to have been composed for a dance. Now that a pæan differs from a song made for a dance is manifest from the poems of Pindar, who composed both’; and so on. It was only when these innovations became extravagant and fanciful that decline set in. ‘Other innovations,’ says Plutarch, *Poetry*, p. 3. For the forms and meters of Greek poetry, see Schmidt, *Rhythmic and Metric of the Classical Languages*, and Hardie, *Lectures on Classical Subjects*.

<sup>1</sup> *Concerning Music* in Plutarch’s *Morals*, I. Ed. Goodwin, Boston, 1883. The development of music and lyric poetry went hand in hand. Lyric poetry was not made to be read or chanted, as epics or elegies were, but to be sung with the accompaniment of a stringed instrument or a flute.

tarch, ‘were also made by Alkman and Stesichorus, who nevertheless receded not from the ancient forms. But Crexus, Timotheus, and Philoxenus, and those poets of the same age, growing more arrogant and studious of novelty, affected those other manners now called Philanthropic and Thematic. For now the fewness of strings and the plainness and majesty of the old music are looked upon as absolutely out of date.’ And he laments that ‘our men of art, contemning its ancient majesty, instead of that manly, grave, heaven-born music, so acceptable to the gods, have brought into the theaters a sort of effeminate musical tattling, mere sound without substance.’<sup>1</sup>

One who might be inclined to question a custom requiring the poet to have so severe a regard for form, who feels that any restraint imposed on the divine passion of the singer is a chaining of the eagle’s wings, may be reminded of the range and power of the modern sonnet. But a Greek would not have found the question intelligible. The mere unrestrained utterances of passion would have been to him hysteria, intoxication, unprofitable madness. The nearest approach to this which he would have tolerated was the dithyramb, the song now stately, now wild, now solemn, now rapid and frenzied, that was fittingly used in the worship of Dionysus.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Plutarch, *op. cit.*, pp. 112, 114. Plutarch was born, it will be remembered, somewhere about A.D. 50, and wrote these words accordingly more than five hundred years after the age of Pindar and Simonides. But he was a Greek, full of a most appreciative sympathy with the great past of his race, and this whole discourse is most instructive. Note the criticism of destructive innovations which he quotes from Pherecrates and Aristophanes, *op. cit.*, pp. 124–25.

<sup>2</sup> Though even the dithyramb, says Müller, ‘was subject to the constraint of fixed laws, and all the separate parts are carefully incorporated in the artfully constructed whole.’ *History of Greek Literature*, chapter xxx ad. fin., quoted with approval by Farnell, p. 664.

Even we may realize the subtle but profoundly real connection between law and art, the universal truth contained in Bacon's remark that 'nature may be commanded only by being obeyed,' and may recognize that the most sublimely inspired creations of Beethoven and Händel are no less restrained by the laws of harmony than Cologne Cathedral by the laws of architecture. The Greeks were no more and no less dominated by law than supreme artists must always be. They simply realized more consciously and more universally than we usually do that while the more subtle and profound the genius, the more subtle and profound will be the laws he will discover and obey, yet the restraint, the obedience must be no less absolute on the higher plane than the lower. And with their innate hunger for clear, tangible, definite thinking, they tried to classify their forms and laws. A poet might choose to express himself in an elegy, a *nome*, an *epinikion*, or what not, but he would no more try to write an elegy in iambics than Händel would have composed the Hallelujah Chorus in a mode suitable for a drinking song or a serenade.

One other characteristic of Greek lyric poetry must be emphasized, a characteristic that pervades the whole body of Greek song that is left us from Archilochus to Pindar — its direct relation to life and conduct. There is little or nothing that is contemplative or ecstatic. It is essentially dynamic, often directly didactic, often religious in a practical and moral sense. It is said that beside the statue of Apollo in the temple of Delos stood the Graces, one carrying a lyre, another a flute, another with a shepherd's pipe set to her lips. There was a tradition that Athena herself taught Apollo his skill on the pipe; and the singers of Greece had it ever in remembrance that the divinities of light and wisdom pre-

sided over their art and gave them their inspiration. ‘The more ancient Greeks,’ says Plutarch, ‘employed their whole musical skill in the worship of the gods and the education of youth; at which time, there being no theaters erected, music was yet confined within the walls of their temples, as being that with which they worshipped the Supreme Deity and sang the praises of virtuous men.’ And though songs come to one’s mind that make one question the literal truth of so strong a statement, it is not uninstructive that a cultured Greek could make it. There are two sides to this peculiarly religious, moral, and practical tone of the Greek lyrics — the tendency to objectiveness, concreteness in subject-matter, and the tendency to moral reflection. But both tendencies illustrate the same fundamentally practical and ethical habit of thinking, the insistence on reality, which was inseparably associated in the Greek mind with the insistence on appropriate forms.

A song is obviously neither a sermon nor a philosophical treatise. Yet we who have in our own tongue the sonnets of Wordsworth and Milton do not need to be told how frequently the lyric emotion of the poet reflects a moral and religious conviction. Of course the conviction may be only the frequent one that all is vanity but pleasure, and this is by no means unknown in Greek poetry. The *Carpe diem* of Horace, Herrick’s ‘Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,’ Omar’s philosophy of the grape, is the message also of Alcæus. ‘It is not well to turn the mind to troubles, for we shall profit nothing, O Bacchus, by grieving; but the best remedy is that we have wine brought and make us drunk.’ But this was too easy and superficial a solution of life’s problems to really satisfy the Hellenic spirit. Reflective minds who found themselves

unable to solve the riddle of life were more apt to drift into the fierce cynicism of Archilochus ('No one when he has died is held in honor and esteem among the citizens, but we turn rather after the excellence of the living man.' 'One great thing I know, to requite with stern evils him who does evilly to me'),<sup>1</sup> the sad bitterness of Theognis<sup>2</sup> or Bacchylides ('not to have been born is best for mortals, and not to look upon the light of the sun; and no one among men is happy always'), and the stately melancholy of Simonides ('Little is the might of men, and bootless their cares, and in a brief life there is trouble upon trouble. And death not to be escaped hangs over all alike; for of that both the good and whosoever is bad have won an equal share.' 'Never say, being mortal, what comes to pass tomorrow, nor, when thou seest a man happy, for how long he will be so; for swift is the transit and not so swift is that of the fly upon the wing').<sup>4</sup> Cynicism, rebellion, philosophic but hopeless acquiescence are all more characteristic of the Greek poets than the 'drink and forget' attitude to life's evils.

Indeed anyone who conceives the Greek as sunny, care-free, a lover of pleasure, would find himself singularly at a loss among the singers of Hellas. The tendency to melancholy is strikingly present, and tendency to joy is strikingly lacking all through. Even Anacreon in the midst of his loves and his banquets shudders at the coming of old age and the prospect of death. 'Now are my temples gray and my head white, and

<sup>1</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> The admirable translation in verse of the extant fragments of Theognis by J. H. Frere is contained in Banks, *The Works of Hesiod, Callimachus, and Theognis*, published in Bohn's Classical Library. See also Symonds's chapter on the 'Gnomic Poets,' *op. cit.*, I, p. 236.

<sup>3</sup> Brooks, p. 146.

<sup>4</sup> Brooks, pp. 117, 120.

gracious youth is no longer with me, and my teeth are old. And a long time of sweet life is no more left me; wherefore I often sigh in fear of Tartarus. For terrible is the depth of Hades, and grievous the descent to it; for it is fated for him that has gone down to come not up again.' Death is of all things the worst, and its inevitableness hangs like a shadow over the Greek mind. 'For to one dread gulf come all things, both great virtues and wealth,' sang Simonides, and Sappho adds with a sad certainty whose uncompromising directness is peculiarly Greek, 'Death is evil, the gods have so judged, for if it were good they would have died.'<sup>1</sup> The logic is hardly convincing, indeed, but the words are wonderfully human in their rebellion, the bitterness of their protest against the dread necessity that lies in wait for mortals.

Yet the lyric poetry of Greece is far from showing a crushed spirit. Melancholy there is, but neither collapse nor surrender. Serenely the poets sang their songs on infinitely varied themes, cheering men on, sometimes doubtless to the pleasures of wine and revelry, but often to valor, loyalty, magnanimity, and justice. Firm endurance of ills, the praise of courage and of patriotic devotion, faith in the ultimate justice of Zeus and the justification of virtue — these are the themes that inspire Archilochus, Bacchylides, and Simonides to their finest songs, and give warmth to the wise verses of Solon. Perhaps two quotations may be permitted, one early,

<sup>1</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, p. 59. It is not easy to reconcile with this the conclusion involved in Solon's tale of Cleobis and Biton (*Herodotus*, I, 31). I suggest the problem without offering a sure solution, but Solon's attitude certainly seems to imply a rejection of the popular and Homeric view of death which is contained in *Odyssey*, xi, and condemned in Plato, *Republic*, III, 386–87, and the substitution of a belief in death as a release, a rest, or the even happier heaven of Pindar (*Olymp.* II).

from Archilochus, one late, from Simonides, the contemporary of Pindar and Æschylus. Archilochus first:

Endure, endure my soul, disquieted by griefs beyond remedy, and setting thy breast against the foe, hold thy ground, taking up thy stand firm and close amid the spears of the enemy. If thou conquerest, exult not openly; if thou art conquered, lie not down in thy house and mourn. But rejoice in that which is meet for rejoicing, and grieve not over much at calamities.

It is difficult to select from Simonides, but this will do as well as any:

There is a story that once virtue dwelt upon the pathless rocks, but that now she guards the holy places of the gods, and meets not in visible presence the eyes of any mortals, save him from whose utmost frame comes heart-grieving sweat, and who reaches the topmost height of manhood.

It may be said then that lyric poetry, to the full extent of its great power, exercised a twofold influence on the race whose genius and aspirations it at once expressed and helped to guide — an influence on the appreciation of form, and an influence on reflection regarding conduct. Its living force as an element in Greek life and education can hardly be overestimated. But its significance may be best appreciated after all if we remember that this one record of genius and development was not isolated. The message of one form of expression is fully understood only if it is seen in its relation to others. Taking all together we may see, underlying all the details and phases of the evolution of the Greek attitude to life, a steadily firmer grasp of one fundamental principle — that freedom has rational meaning only when it is dominated by

law.<sup>1</sup> How to maintain and expand the ancient Hellenic traditions of freedom, and how to make freedom rational by discovering the appropriate forms and laws that should control its expression, were problems that lay behind every phase and utterance of the Greek genius. Lyric poetry from Archilochus to Pindar illustrates this with peculiar force and instructiveness, no doubt. But the same principles, the same aims, may be seen in any collection of Greek pottery, in any statue or relief, in any temple.

Of the infinitely varied forms given to lyric poetry, one, the dithyramb, a wild and passionate song used in the festivals of Dionysus,<sup>2</sup> was the ancestor of the drama. At some time in its evolution the dithyramb was made choral, i.e., was sung by a chorus dressed to represent goat-footed satyrs,<sup>3</sup> the traditional forest companions of Dionysus. And Arion,<sup>4</sup> the musician who may have brought this about, is said to have introduced spoken interludes, narrative verses declaimed by the leader of the chorus. A generation later, about the middle of the sixth century, a further improvement

<sup>1</sup> Not law in the 'legal' sense but in the sense of absolute, inevitable *rightness*. Cf. Montesquieu's 'Laws are necessary relations springing from the nature of things.' Form and law are closely related words. Neither one means anything by itself. To say a thing well does not make sense unless the thing is worth saying, but if it is worth saying there is only one way to really say it.

<sup>2</sup> The god who presided over the vine and over the miraculous, life-giving power of things that grow, the god, sometimes joyous and sometimes fierce, whose worship aroused more unrestrained enthusiasm than that of any other Greek divinity, and whom we are apt to regard with disfavor as the god of drunkenness. See Walter Pater, *Greek Studies* and below, C. vi.

<sup>3</sup> Hence the word *tragedy*, literally *goat song*, from *tragos*, a goat.

<sup>4</sup> The same Arion who, in one of the pleasant tales of Herodotus, was once thrown into the sea by pirates and borne safely to shore on the backs of dolphins who were charmed by his singing.

was made. A reciter or actor (*hypocrites*) was introduced to aid in the presentation of the plot; as if, for instance, someone were to declaim the story of the Creation, of the Messiah, or of Judas Maccabæus in intervals between the choruses of the oratorio. The actor, by changing his costume and donning different masks, could assume different characters and could even carry on a dialogue with the chorus, giving the whole rendering a life, a movement, a passion that a mere series of anthems or choral odes could never attain.

This was the form of tragedy as Æschylus found it early in the fifth century. In the space (*orchestra*) reserved for it the chorus — divided by a central altar into two companies — danced and chanted the dithyrambic ode. Before the chorus, on a raised stage, stood the actor to declaim his verses in appropriate character — whether king, queen, herald, or priest. Here then was the material for the making of the drama. And Æschylus achieved the transformation by adding a second actor. So that now with two actors and the chorus there could be a real interplay of dialogue, a powerful instrument for the working out of a dramatic plot. It was no longer necessary that this should concern itself with Dionysus; from that convention the predecessors of Æschylus had already broken away, just as they had ceased to represent the chorus as satyrs. But it was considered fitting that the theme should be at least religious or heroic, and only rarely did a dramatist venture on a plot in any sense secular.

The Athenian tragedy was thus more like a modern oratorio or grand opera than a modern drama. It was almost wholly a matter of dialogue, of stately song and of equally stately dance. There was no rapid or strenuous action. Indeed acting as we understand it was unknown on the Greek

tragic stage, at any rate until Euripides. If struggle or death were involved in the story, it was narrated by a messenger, not presented directly. The masks and the high boots (*coturni*) worn to increase the actor's stature to heroic proportions made facial expression and rapid movement alike impossible. Moreover, the plot of the drama was invariably familiar to everyone, as familiar usually as the story of Adam and Eve or of Noah is to us. So that the whole attention of the audience was directed to the thought and emotions, to the interpretation and reflection that the poet offered, to the sorrow, the fears, the warnings, the troubled broodings or the bursts of prophetic vision.

All of the extant dramas of Æschylus, with the exception of *The Persians*, are concerned then with the exploits and sufferings of gods and heroes. And Æschylus, like Sophocles and Euripides a little later, makes his dramas living sermons on the conduct of life, on the relation of gods to men, on the great ethical and spiritual forces that are the life currents of religion. His conscious purpose is didactic, ethical, and religious. 'What are the points,' asks Æschylus of Euripides as they talk in Hades — 'What are the points for which a noble poet obtains our praise?' And Euripides answers, not that the function of the poet is to give pleasure or to express emotion or to weave words into beautiful form, but — 'For his ready wit and his counsels sage, and because he trains the citizens to be better townsmen and worthier men.'<sup>1</sup>

This gives us the clue that we must follow in the next chapter. All of the forms of expression developed by the Greeks from Archilochus to Æschylus were indeed exact, precise, inexorably adapted to occasion and spirit. But they

<sup>1</sup> In the *Frogs* of Aristophanes.

were rigid only in that they were the most perfect way to express what was to be expressed; what was to be expressed was after all the dominant element in the situation. Form for form's sake, art for art's sake, expression without regard to the value of the thing expressed, was meaningless. Beauty and truth were correlative, complementary, practically the same thing viewed from two angles, and as the Greeks learned the value of perfect form they were learning also how to search for the essential in life and in all the phenomena of life.

## CHAPTER VI

### *How the Greek Mind Found Itself: The Orphic Reformation*

UNTIL sometime about the sixth century the Greeks were artists rather than philosophers, creative rather than critical, interested in doing things rather than in looking for reasons. Not that they did everything well. Some quite important things they did indifferently or very badly. But in two directions they gaily followed impulses that were of enormous consequence. Athletics and poetry were made into fine arts, and in poetry especially the Hellenic quickness, freedom, and directness of look were combined with a sense for form that has never been equaled. There was reflection too, but unanalyzed, unrationalized, and in a sense passive — wonder not yet stirred to curiosity. It was only by slow degrees that men here and there began to ask questions, to compare and doubt, to consider why this and that happened, why this was right and that wrong, and whether, by better understanding, matters could be improved. They were still restless, active, practical, and still took as much delight as ever in games and songs and politics and the arts — more slowly perfected than poetry — of building and sculpture. But long before the rise of the drama and the odes of Simonides and Pindar brought lyric poetry to its peak, the Greeks developed an increasing sensitiveness to obscurities and inconsistencies and riddles — not as dark things to be waisted about in dirges, but as things to be enquired into and cleared up and reduced to order.

And this gradually came to be the prevailing passion of the

Greek mind. The same love of clearness and perfection that animated their singers and athletes led them, when they began reasoning about it, to a conviction that to every mystery there was a key, to every tangle a clue, to every enterprise an essential thing to be done, to every confusion an arrangement that would make it unconfused, to every problem of speculation or action a rational procedure — *techne*, art — that would eliminate the chance of error. It was a long time before this culminated in Aristotle and the Alexandrians and finally destroyed itself. And the first signs of it did not appear in critical analysis, but in a kind of constructive dissatisfaction with the Hesiodic explanation of how, why, and to what end things occurred. That dissatisfaction issued in one of the most momentous religious movements in the history of the western world — the earliest effort to reject what was baseless and futile and to find in religion at once a release from despair and a rational technique of living.

It must be remembered that in the sixth century, even in the fifth, the religion of Homer and Hesiod was still the established religion of the Greeks. It was mixed with all sorts of primitive survivals, full of contradictions, cruelties, and absurdities; but these have never been serious obstacles to faith, and while ethical standards changed with the progress of social order, yet theology and the religious sanction of morals must have altered very little in the mind of the average citizen or villager for century after century. The gods of the fifth century were very much the gods of the ninth. Yet there was some change, and not for the better, ascribing to the gods a sort of peevishness, a watchful dislike of human excellence.

Take, for instance, such indications as are found in Herodotus, who was neither a theologian nor a philosopher, but an intelligent, much traveled observer and chronicler of the type of a modern war correspondent. His tales are often nothing but entertaining anecdotes, it is true, but frequently they are significant. ‘Crœsus,’ said his Solon to the wealthy and powerful king of Lydia, ‘do you inquire of me concerning human affairs — of me who knows that *the divinity is jealous and delights in confusion?*’<sup>1</sup> ‘Do you see,’ said the wise Artabanus to Xerxes, ‘how the deity strikes with his thunder the tallest animals, and suffers them not to be ostentatious, but the smaller animals do not at all offend him? Do you see how he ever hurls his bolts against the loftiest buildings, and trees of the like kind? For the deity is wont to cut off anything that is too highly exalted.... Thus even a large army is often defeated by a small one, in such manner as this: when the deity, through jealousy, strikes them with terror or lightning, whereby they perish in a manner unworthy of themselves; for the deity will not suffer anyone but himself to have high thoughts.’ So the unvarying good fortune of Polycrates troubled his friend Amasis, ‘knowing as I do that the divinity is jealous... for I cannot remember that I ever heard of any man, who, having been constantly successful, did not at last utterly perish.’ Crœsus himself, made wise through experience, warns Cyrus that ‘there is a wheel in human affairs which, constantly revolving, does not suffer the same persons to be always successful.’ And as with the speeches of Thucydides, the value of these reported sayings does not depend on their accuracy. The point is that Herodotus quotes them as wise.

<sup>1</sup> Herodotus, vii, 10.

So in the fifth century the gods were still powerful, arbitrary, and jealous. The fundamental sin was still arrogance *hubris*. The fundamental virtue was moderation, temperance, ‘nothing too much.’ The gods might or might not punish other kinds of evil, but they would certainly punish pride — a doctrine that flourished for ages into the Christian era, when Pride was to the Church the first of the seven deadly sins. And all this no doubt held a profound truth. But as applied by Herodotus it rested on the Hesiodic theology, not at its best but at its worst. The thing to be kept in mind about the gods was not their justice but their jealousy. The Olympian religion had, in fact, come to the point where it would have to be either reborn or replaced — or both. It had ceased to be a stimulus to fruitful thinking or effective living. It was respectable, it was intertwined with pleasant traditions and festivals, it gave countless patterns to poets and sculptors and vase painters, there was undeniably something immortal about it, but just as undeniably it left the weightiest problems of life untouched. It was as unsatisfactory to earnest minds — if we may make a questionable parallel — as the conventions and rituals of the seventeenth century Church were to George Fox and John Bunyan.

But an Athenian who heard Herodotus read his History at Olympia and then went home to hear the tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles might well have said that the revival had more than begun. In the *Agamemnon* and the *Oedipus Rex* even the least thoughtful must have felt the surge of a tremendous moral vitality and passion. Something new and transforming had occurred of which the epic poets had never dreamed and of which Herodotus was apparently unaware, as if the gods themselves had been rediscovered. And it was

not a matter solely of the gods. However Æschylus himself may have felt about it there were many in his Athens who were troubled less about the justice of Zeus than about a sort of hunger of soul, who were stirred by spiritual uneasiness and impatience with the traditional, the external, the formal. And to this uneasiness there was a response. A new religion was in the air, a religion of salvation, emotional, austere and intense, with a new god and a new way of regarding the end of life.

The new god was Dionysus or Bacchus. The new way of life was ascribed to Orpheus, 'child of the Moon and the Muses,' and came to be known as Orphism. Both seem to have come into the Greek lands from Thrace — though there is no certainty about it — and there are stories that show them as originally hostile.<sup>1</sup> But if so they were somehow reconciled, and the result was a movement whose influence may have been all the more penetrating because of its two-fold appeal — with its Dionysiac frenzy and its strict discipline, its grotesque cosmogony and its insistence on purification. Part of its current was indeed lost in magics and charlatanisms and 'the pleasurable amusements called *Mysteries*'.<sup>2</sup> But with all its excesses, condemned so scornfully by Plato, there was a saving element of regenerating power, power to make men think of their souls and desire purity and hope for immortality. How long Orphism preserved its identity, how definitely Pythagoras and Socrates, Plato and Paul were touched by it, how far its mysticism was peculiarly its own,

<sup>1</sup> A lost tragedy of Æschylus, the *Bassarai*, told of the death of Orpheus at the hands of Mænads sent against him by Dionysus. For the legends of both Dionysus and Orpheus see Jane Harrison, *Prolegomena*, 456–62.

<sup>2</sup> *Republic*, 364–65.

it is impossible to tell.<sup>1</sup> Even if we had more information it would be like trying to define precisely the influence of Rousseau and Wesley on modern thought. But the main features of the great wave of religious reconstruction that began with the Orphic gospel and was carried on by the tragic poets and the philosophers are clear and significant enough, even if we have to remain unsure of origins and details. And for both the good and ill in it the initial credit must go to Dionysus, Liberator and Savior. Savior from what?

Dionysus, it will be remembered, was not originally an Olympian deity and hardly appears in the epics at all. Some points he had in common with the Homeric Olympians, certainly, but in some essential respects he and Demeter were in a class by themselves, presiding over the tremendous and mysterious processes of life, the growth of plant and fruit from seed and the equally wonderful transformation of fruit into the blood and bone and nerve of the living man. Of all this never-ending miracle one phase was even more amazing than the rest — the effect of the juice of the grape that we call intoxication. Now Dionysus was the wine-god, who made men drunk. But having said this we must unsay it, for the phenomenon of drunkenness has a repulsiveness to us that obscures what is to more naïve minds than ours the magic of it. The magic of life's transformations was in fact the central interest of the Dionysiac religion, and the element

<sup>1</sup> Macchioro, *From Orpheus to Paul* and Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy* are surer of their facts and inferences than the present writer finds possible. To Cornford Orpheus was a reformer of the Dionysiac religion, Pythagoras a reformer of Orphism, moving away from Dionysus toward Apollo—which is a very possible summing-up. And Macchioro's argument for the influence of Orphism on Paul is quite fascinating. Speculation is often more suggestive than a too severe scrutiny of evidence, after all.

in it most alien to the modern mind before Goethe and Hegel — to the scholar the least Hellenic, to the intelligent Christian the least religious.

Drunkenness is, without doubt, the very antithesis of reasonableness. Nevertheless we must remember that in some of its manifestations intoxication is not unlike the ecstasy that is characteristic of deeply felt religion in all ages — a frenzy that in its emotional concentration seems a kind of strange intensifying of life. The worship of Dionysus did retain always a gross side, just as wine does produce animalism and fierce brutality as well as exhilaration and gaiety. Indeed any kind of ecstasy, springing from motives however admirable — religion, love, patriotism, social reform — has its analogy to drunkenness, its possibilities of poison and savagery, released as it is from the normal control that we call sanity. But it has also possibilities of insight and driving power far beyond that of reasoned conviction. It is a curious mixture that has puzzled many thoughtful minds. And no matter how disgusting we find the intoxication of wine, how suspicious we are of the intoxication that we call religious or social or moral fanaticism, we do have to recognize its astonishing power to break the apathy of habit. The religion of Dionysus did not dethrone the Olympians, did not abandon the old theology, but it did substitute a living faith for a dead one. Its orgies and mysteries might repel a sane mind, but they assuredly expressed a transforming joy, a sense of unbounding freedom and power, that was utterly foreign to the placid religion of Hesiod. It is no accident that the Greek drama was inseparably associated with the festivals of Dionysus.

Now the essential thing about that Bacchic transformation

— and it is difficult to express it in our language because every word we use is inaccurate — was that the worshipper became the god himself. That is, if he were a true initiate; ‘many are wand-bearers, but few are Bacchoi!’ But all might strive for and hope for the change which would deliver them from their mortal prison and fulfil their divinity. And this was the doctrine seized upon by Orpheus and made the key of the Orphic gospel. The Stoics of later days were also to assert man’s divinity, but the Stoic creed was a soberly reasoned one, the Orphic not reasoned at all. It had been ‘revealed’ that the dust of which we are made contains the god, literally — as literally as water contains hydrogen or ore contains gold. The fact that this was conveyed in the most fantastic and incredible of myths had no bearing whatever on its ‘truth’: mystic assurance does not examine evidence: and to an Orphic convert it was as clear as it was intoxicating — not that we are made in the *image* of God, not that we can become *like* God, or one with God, but that *we are gods*. Man’s soul is not as Homer made it, a breath and a shadow; it is divine, its immortality not a mockery but a reality, a glorious reality if we choose to make it so.

So what has to be achieved by every man is the liberation of his true self, the god in him, from its prison of clay. It is a difficult matter, for the soul is smothered and defaced by the defiling temptations and impurities of the body, by — as we say — sin, sin being not crime but defilement. But if we do realize our divinity by ridding ourselves of all that is earthly we join the immortals, and this may be done by the help of mystic rites, of fasting, self-denial and prayer. And — to revert to the past tense, perhaps unnecessarily — the very effort and hope was a joy. The Orphic-Dionysiac ecstasy was

the ecstasy of deliverance, of escape from earth, of purification accomplished. The initiate was of good cheer because he had overcome the world. How far Orphism spiritualized the doctrine of personal immortality is, of course, doubtful, but in any case the growth of the idea was, as it were, an illustration of itself; born in a gross myth and nurtured by the god of wine, it ultimately consoled the last hours of Socrates and inspired the most beautiful pages in Plato's Dialogues.

'The body is the prison of the soul'; 'The kingdom of God is within you'; 'Ye must be born again'; 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God' — all these sayings could have been used by an Orphic teacher. The stress was laid, not on moral law, but on purification, spiritual vision, and an immortality of blessedness earned by escape from all that is mortal. To say that it represented a revolt against Hesiod is as true and as untrue as to say that the prophet Amos represented a revolt against the Mosaic law. It was certainly not so intended in either case. But just as certainly it brought a radical change of emphasis, a transforming emotion, the turning of a heterogeneous mass of quaint and fantastic tales into a living force for understanding and living.

The history of Orphism is the history of an influence, the influence of three dynamic ideas — the divinity of man, immortality, and the necessity of purification — in this world and in the continued life after death. Now to these, in the fifth century, was added another doctrine that was not Orphic but that rounded out what we have been calling the religious reformation — the goodness of the gods, Fate practically identified with Zeus and conceived as just, not monotheism but very close to it. And here we can turn with relief from fragments and traditions and inferences to Pindar and

Æschylus, the odes of the one and the seven extant tragedies of the other. They refer to the gods in almost every line, and their gods have the same names as Homer's. In some respects they are the same gods, but not quite the same — less companionable, more mature, more terrible in their power and their righteousness. They are almighty, all-seeing, inflexibly just — no longer playful, passionate, easily deceived, and quarrelsome. Tales of divine cruelty and weakness are sternly put aside as untrue and irreverent. And if we except — for a moment — the *Prometheus Bound*, almost every page of Æschylus expresses the same conception of the power, wisdom, and justice of Zeus.

Tireless and effortless, works forth its will the arm divine,  
God from his holy seat, in calm of unarmed power  
Brings forth the deed at its appointed hour.<sup>1</sup>

Yet this high conception of the greatness and majesty of the gods means more than reverence for beings who transcend humanity. Man must bow in awe before them, but he is himself — in his origin and possibilities — one of them. It is not that the gods are human, but that men are in some sense divine. And the gods are not always perfect, just as men need not always be foolish. Gods and men to Pindar are kin in more than the Homeric sense. ‘One race is there of men, one race of gods; and from our mother (earth) we both have our being, but in our powers are we wholly separate; for the race of men is nought; but the brazen heaven abides, a dwelling-place steadfast forever. Yet withal we have some likeness to the immortals.’<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Suppliant Maidens*, translated by Morshead, p. 11. Cf. also Pindar, Pyth. II, 49 seq., Pyth. III, 27, and Olymp. I, 65.

<sup>2</sup> Nem. VI, translated by R. C. Jebb, *Lectures and Essays*, pp. 5-8.

So Æschylus accepts the tale of the supplanting of Uranos by Kronos and Kronos by Zeus, and draws from it the lesson that wisdom and power grow through suffering with the immortals as with men. Zeus himself is a tyrant in the *Prometheus Bound*; yet knowing the outcome of the struggle of will between the Titan and the Lord of Heaven we may see the play as only the first act of the complete drama, a drama that portrays the advance of both Prometheus and Zeus to a higher wisdom, a more long-suffering patience and moderation, an ultimate harmony in which justice takes the place of tyranny.<sup>1</sup> Gods and men alike are subject to the same laws. It is possible, indeed, that Æschylus might have said as Abraham did, ‘Shall not the judge of all the world do right!’ — but he would certainly have approved the suggestion made two generations later by Socrates that a thing is not right because it pleases the gods, but that it pleases the gods because it is right.

A devout Christian of the fifth or fifteenth century might have found this confusing. But to Æschylus there was no paradox. It would not have occurred to any Greek that divinity implies omnipotence and completeness — even existence — from the beginning. The gods were not always perfect and may not be perfect now. But they are the gods. We can reach our best life only if we look to them for guidance and inspiration. ‘Things of a day — what are we and what not? Man is a dream of shadows. Nevertheless, when a glory from God hath shined on them, a clear light abideth upon men, and serene life.’

<sup>1</sup> See Myers's essay on Æschylus in Abbott's *Hellenica*. It will be remembered that the unit of tragic drama was the *trilogy*. The *Prometheus Bound* was the first tragedy of the trilogy, the *Prometheus Unbound* the last. The second and third plays are lost.

There is nothing in all this actually opposed to the older Greek tradition. Prudence, courage, reverence, justice, mercy to the helpless and suppliant, and perhaps above all humility, temperance, moderation, 'nothing too much' — these are the characteristics of the virtuous man to Pindar and Æschylus as to all serious Greek thinkers since Hesiod. But they added a dynamic urge that is difficult to express in any moral formula. It is true that the older poets had said that Zeus punishes sin and rewards virtue; but it remained for these spokesmen of what was in so many ways a new religion to sweep aside the contradiction involved in the championship of justice by an unjust God, the punishment of lawlessness by a being himself lawless. Hardly even in the Hebrew prophets is the righteousness of God and the certain punishment of sin by a just and all-seeing Deity asserted with more earnest insistence than in the *Agamemnon* of Æschylus. Moreover, Æschylus is equally sure that the sin of the father is visited upon the children only because the children repeat the sin, and that this — not a petty jealousy, a cruel whim, or a blind Fate — is the secret of the curse that lay on the houses of Pelops and Labdacus.

If this reminds us of Ezekiel,<sup>1</sup> there is a further analogy between the Hebrew and the Æschylean points of view in the doctrine that sin blinds the sinner, that if man insists on going astray the God who would willingly aid him for good turns tempter and aids him for evil, that the Lord may 'harden Pharaoh's heart' and in his anger move David to number the host of Israel, that 'when the fool to folly hasteth God shall speed him to his fall.'<sup>2</sup> Such a belief moved

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ezekiel, chapter 18.

<sup>2</sup> So the ghost of Darius (*Persians*, translated by Morshead, linc 92):

Plato a century later to deep displeasure, sure as he was that God is the author of nothing but good. But it is a long advance on the ordinary Homeric point of view. It views God as essentially just, the personification of law, rewarding folly with blindness, sin with suffering, goodness with blessings. And Æschylus sees clearly that this doctrine of the unvarying justice of Zeus overthrows the popular notion that God is jealous of prosperity. If He casts down the mighty, it is because of sin, not because He will ‘suffer none but himself to have high thoughts.’

‘Not bliss or wealth it is, but impious deed,  
From which that aftergrowth of ill doth rise;  
Woe springs from wrong, the plant is like the seed —  
While Right, in honor’s house, does his own likeness  
breed.’

Pindar, more clearly than Æschylus, certainly more clearly than the Hebrew prophets, adds to his conviction that sin is punished the equally firm conviction that purification ultimately brings happiness. No other Greek poet, indeed, has so clear and so beautiful a faith in a heaven for the righteous. There is a long step from the eleventh book of the *Odyssey* to the Islands of the Blessed of the second Olympian — one of the few clear signs in Pindar of Orphic influence.

Those who have had the courage to be steadfast thrice in this world, and thrice in the world of spirits, and to keep their souls utterly from wrong, ascend by the path

‘But if a king push forward to his fate the God himself allures to death the man infatuate.’ But see especially the second and third choruses of the *Agamemnon*. There was no Greek Satan — only man’s own folly and ‘God in his anger.’

of Zeus to the tower of Kronos; there the breezes of Ocean breathe around the Islands of the Blest; and flowers of gold are bright, some on the fair trees of the land, and some in the waters, with chains and wreathes whereof they twine their hands, by the righteous decrees of Rhadamanthus.'<sup>1</sup>

All through the Odes the after-death world is as real as the present world. In Homer the dwellers in Hades are ignorant of all that passes on earth. Achilles asks Odysseus eagerly for news of his son. Not so in Pindar. The dead watch over the living and rejoice in their deeds.<sup>2</sup> They are happy and are really alive. To Pindar death is simply a fact of life, not its supreme horror. Superstition survived, indeed. The Greeks continued to know their Homer better than they did their Pindar. The Homeric theology and eschatology held their place in many minds. But it is hardly fanciful to see in the Orphic movement supplemented and enlarged as it was by Pindar and Æschylus, by Empedocles and Pythagoras, for all the overemphasis of some of its devotees on ritual and ecstasy, a preparing of the way for the spiritual religion and lofty ethics of Socrates and Plato.

<sup>1</sup> Olymp. II, 68, *seq.*, translated by Jebb in *Lectures and Essays*, pp. 54–55. See also the preceding lines, ‘But the good, enjoying ever sunshine,’ etc. I take Jebb’s translation of Pindar whenever I can, but Paley and Myers are both good, and there is a beautiful rendering of this particular passage in Symonds, *Greek Poets*, I, 360, with two *threnoi* translated by Conington along the same line.

<sup>2</sup> Pyth. V, 95, 98–101; Olymp. VIII, 77–84; Olymp. XIV, 18 *seq.* Cf. the appearance of the ghost of Darius in *The Persians* as wise as ever. Yet one is puzzled to find that, while he knew nothing of the expedition of Xerxes and the disaster of Salamis, he is yet aware not only of the army left in Greece under Mardonius, but of its camping place in Boeotia, its coming destruction, and the present home-coming of the king in rags. Æschylus had doubtless a quite excusably hazy idea as to just what knowledge could be expected in a shade. He was not, after all, an Orphic initiate.

To sum up, then, Orphism preached a new conception of the essentials of virtue, a discovery of a new meaning in the religious sanction for right action. It stood for the assertion of man as divine and therefore immortal, of sin as all that defiles and obscures that divinity, of the necessity of salvation. When to this was added the passionate assertion of the justice of the gods the reformers had given their message. Few, no doubt, saw the logical consequences of the reaction of the new religion on the old. Men are seldom logical, and the acceptance of a new way of life does not easily cancel familiar and sacred associations that are really inconsistent with it. But it was bound to be ultimately seen that if Homer and Hesiod were the Greek Bible, they were a Bible fast growing self-contradictory and inadequate to a thoughtful mind. Æschylus and Pindar, clinging as they might to the forms and names of the old faith, were pouring new wine into old bottles that were fast cracking under the strain. Consciously or unconsciously, they were steadily drifting away from the crude religion of the *Iliad*, the prudential and worldly ethics of the *Works and Days*.<sup>1</sup>

And it must be remembered, using the terms of a later age, that this Reformation was part of a Renaissance. A new creed and a new ethic, even a noble one, has effects more subtle and shattering than its apostles realize because it is never a solitary phenomenon injected into an otherwise unchanged society, but is bound to affect and be affected by other disturbances. Moreover, the Orphic-Dionysiac movement was not all noble. Its impact on many minds was

<sup>1</sup> See, for short accounts of Orphism, Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*; Adam, *Religious Teachers of Greece*; Nilsson, *History of Greek Religion*; Nock, *Conversion*; for a more detailed study, Jane Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*; and Boulanger, *Orphée*.

confusing and destructive. As with Protestantism, Evangelicalism, Romanticism, Socialism, and many another wave of passionate protest, it was at once liberating and disintegrating, even though in this case we can see the good more clearly than the evil. And to its redeeming and dissolving power must be added other elements in the situation - the pride and confidence of the victors of Marathon, the elimination of ancient commercial rivals and the consequent expansion of sea trade, the critical and logical training, the free thought and speech, the alert, wide-eyed outlook of the newborn Athenian democracy. All these working together had brought the Greek mind face to face with questions that poets and prophets could not answer. The mental eagerness, the keenness and breadth of vision that had waxed greater from Hesiod to *Æschylus*, from Archilochus to Pindar, was ready for Thales and Xenophanes, almost ready for the critical philosophy of Socrates, Thucydides, and Plato.

## CHAPTER VII

*How the Greek Mind Found Itself: The Birth of Philosophy*

**T**HREE is a type of mind to which the confusions and maladjustments of the world are a distress and a fear — flight from them to some refuge of faith a necessity. Religion, not wholly but quite largely, springs from this distress and fear. With all its immense power for good and evil it tends to demand certainty, to rest on authority, revelation, and intuition, to find comfort in ritual, to combine its earnest search for the unseen with a blind reliance on forms and incantations. It is closely allied to poetry, to painting, to some of the noblest motives of conduct and the richest aspects of life — and it can be the enemy of all these. The Greeks never knew it at either its best or its worst, partly because the Greek mind always found authority repulsive, partly because its mysticism was checked and balanced by a curiosity that loved definiteness. Important as the Orphic reformation was, its victory was never complete. Its story should be written on one side of the page, and on the other side one quite different.

For there is another type of mind to which no refuge is needed because there is no distress, to which confusion is not a horror but a fascination, a summons to investigation and action. Milton's Satan and Goethe's Mephisto and Luther's Devil are picturesque symbols of what the historian knows as the scientific temper. Not that science is the enemy of religion, but frequently it takes on the aspect of an enemy because it is bound to be critical, and once scientific thinking

awakes it begins to apply standards that few religious systems can stand without a shock. For science, whether rational or experimental or both, implies the persistent questioning of creeds and forms, the combination of skepticism and search for truth, of severe inquiry and impatience with tradition. In our day we make a convenient — and perhaps obscuring — distinction between science and philosophy. In sixth-century Greece there was no such distinction. We may call the pioneer thinkers of Ionia the first recorded European scientists or the first recorded European philosophers, but by either term we mean the same thing — men who made reason and inquiry the test of truth rather than either authoritative tradition or mystical intuition.

The scientific movement that began in Miletus early in the sixth century and that seems to have spread and taken root in the Greek cities of Asia and South Italy long before it reached Athens, is universally ascribed to Thales and his associates, Anaximander and Anaximenes. All that we know of Thales is contained in a few reported utterances that with all their doubtful meaning are as significant in their way and as potent in their results as Marathon and Salamis. They are thus stated by Aristotle: (1) The earth floats on water; (2) Water is the cause of all things; (3) All things are full of gods. These, at first sight, would seem to be too cryptic to have any value. But whatever we may say of the first and third, the second alone would account for the honor paid to Thales by his successors. They put aside his conclusion, indeed, but the attitude of mind involved was never forgotten. It was the first recorded effort to turn away from poets and prophets on the one hand, from the superficial obviousness of 'common sense' and popular belief on the other, to look

directly and frankly at the world and ask dispassionately the tremendous question of *cause*. Is there a reason for things? Is there any real order in the universe? Is there any controlling principle? If so, what is it?

How Thales reached his conclusion that water is the underlying basis of all things, the element or first principle of which the infinite variations of the visible world are only forms and manifestations, we do not know. It was far from foolish, but any hypothesis might have served the purpose equally well as a tentative first proposition, and those who rejected it nevertheless followed his lead as to aim and method. The first principle is not water, said Anaximander, but an infinite substance, the Boundless, containing all opposites, whose conflict makes the world as we have it. This, said Anaximenes, is good but vague and inadequate: the first principle is really Air. ‘Just as our soul, being air, holds us together, so do breath and air encompass the whole world’ — a view which is preserved, like a fossil, in our word ‘spirit.’<sup>1</sup>

Before the sixth century was over, these first purely physical inquiries (*Physis*, Nature — a word destined to have a history and an influence of incalculable importance) were broadened and vitalized by a direct and unflinching application of the same kind of inquiry to religion and ethics. Little by little the scientific quest for the ‘essential’ turned on the old stories a searching light that they were unable to endure. Perhaps the best illustration of the growing skepticism that

<sup>1</sup> The Latin equivalent of the Greek word *pneuma*, both words meaning literally *breath*. We keep the literal meaning of *pneuma* in *pneumatic* and *pneumonia*, but *spirit* took and kept a metaphysical sense only. An irreverent philologist might assert that the saying ‘God is a Spirit’ (*pneuma* in Greek, *spiritus* in Latin) is precisely the doctrine of Anaximenes, but he would not mean it seriously.

was to reach its height in the age of Euripides is to be found in the fragments of Xenophanes of Colophon. Xenophanes was by birth (about 570 b.c.) an Asiatic Greek, then by exile a resident and traveler in Sicily and South Italy, an apostle in both east and west of radical skepticism and religious reconstruction. Just what definite idea he had in his statement that 'there is one God' is open to controversy. Indeed, it is possible that he could not have defined his statement himself any more than could many wise and devout men since his day, and we might well attach to it another illuminating remark ascribed to him: 'There never was or will be a man who has a clear certainty as to what I say about the gods and about all things; for even if he does chance to say what is right, yet he himself does not know that it is so. But all are free to guess. These are guesses something like the truth.'<sup>1</sup>

But however uncertain we may be about his actual notion of God and the universe, his rejection of the Homeric theology is uncompromising. One of the most famous and often quoted passages in the whole literature of skepticism is contained in three fragments (Fr. 5, 6, 6a) which may be considered as one utterance: 'But mortals think that the gods are born as they are, and have perception like theirs, and voice and form. Yes, and if oxen or lions had hands, and could paint with their hands and produce works of art as men do, horses would paint the forms of the gods like horses, and oxen like oxen. Each would represent them with bodies according to the form of each. So the Ethiopians make their gods black

<sup>1</sup> Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, far the best book on the subject in English. Fuller, *History of Greek Philosophy: Thales to Democritus*, is good too, and perhaps more readable than Burnet.

and snub-nosed; the Thracians give theirs red hair and blue eyes.' And his moral condemnation of the poets is just as explicit: 'Homer and Hesiod have ascribed to the gods all things that are a shame and disgrace among men.'

The effect of all this on its destructive and skeptical side was no doubt as serious as it was unavoidable. Part of the function of philosophy was — as it still is — critical and negative. But Xenophanes himself was far from being a mere skeptic. He tore down that he might rebuild, destroyed the veil that he might see what it concealed. The final Greek synthesis as to the nature of God and the laws of life did not come indeed until the time of Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics, all of whom were inspired and guided by the constructive radicalism of Socrates. But the sixth-century pioneers, like all Greek thinkers, were primarily the discoverers not of any conclusion but of a method — the persistent, critical, skeptical, and hopeful considering and reconsidering of things, the trying and rejecting of hypotheses, the search for mental clarity.

Socrates was to illustrate this most completely, no doubt, and his greatest pupil hardly less so. Both inherited a tradition of method and search rather than of dogma. There were, of course, doctrines. Once the passion for rational exploration was stirred, it grew rapidly and issued in guesses of all kinds, sometimes fantastic but all stimulating, and the eager minds of the fifth century were willing to entertain and discuss anything that seemed a happy thought toward solution. There was even dogmatism of a kind, for a man who finds a satisfying answer to a riddle is apt to be positive about it and to be aggressive in its defense. But it was an argumentative dogmatism, always open to modification as

inquiry proceeded. Even within groups, like the Ionians and the Eleatics, there could be differences of opinion, and there were no real heresies because there was no real orthodoxy. New contributions were being made all the time. While Socrates was still a young man, Anaxagoras brought the Milesian tradition to Athens with brilliant and fruitful suggestions of his own.<sup>1</sup> And there were at least three other men whose bold adventures toward a constructive view of the world influenced all who came after them — Heraclitus, Parmenides, and Pythagoras.

It is frequently stated — quite warrantably too — that Heraclitus believed the primal element to be not water or air but fire. Such a statement by itself, however, might be deceptive. The word ‘fire’ does not indicate a thing so much as a process, and a process of which the very essence is furious motion. Steady and clearly defined as a flame may look, it is yet the perfection of never-ceasing change. Now this was exactly what the central fact of the universe was to Heraclitus — solidity in change, being through becoming, one in many, harmony in eternal differentiation. So as he looked at the world and tried to find some principle that would make it intelligible, he decided that this universal fluidity pointed to only one conclusion, that the one fundamental truth is expressed in the word ‘becoming.’ ‘All things flow.’ Change is the order of the universe. No sooner do we say a thing than it has changed to something else. As we utter the words ‘This is’ you must add ‘This no longer is.’ No statement can be made, that is to say, which must not at once be denied. Logically, of course, this leads to the conclusion that all knowledge is vain. Yet such a negative proposition was

<sup>1</sup> Plato, *Apology*.

necessary before the next step was possible, and in the meantime the suggestion that the world was a process rather than simply an established fact was of permanent value.

Parmenides agreed that the change and deceptiveness of the phenomenal world does indeed prove its unreality. But he did not stop there. The very effort to know truth implies that truth exists, but it is evidently not a matter of the senses. Behind all the world of sensation — of which Parmenides accepts the doctrine that no statement can be made and which he therefore puts aside as a profitless field of contemplation — there is an eternal and fundamental world of Being, one and indivisible, which always *is* and never changes. ‘The One remains, the Many change and pass.’ And yet this conception, immensely fruitful as it ultimately proved to be, was so far as ineffectual as the doctrine of Heraclitus, for once Parmenides asserted absolute Being he had reached the end. It was faith without evidence and without relation to life. Of this One, unchanging Existence he could make no statement whatever. He asserted Unity, Permanence, and there he stopped, for between the falsity and unreality of the world around us and the absolute Being there was apparently no connection. One was real, the other unreal, and that was all.

Now one step toward some understanding of this absolute Being was made by Anaxagoras. The controlling element in man himself is his mind. By analogy, then, the absolute Being must be Mind (*Nous*), ‘the subtlest of all things and the purest, having knowledge of all things and power over all things. And Mind set in order all things that were to be and were, and all things that are not and that are, and this revolution in which now revolve the stars and the sun and

the moon and the air and the æther that are separated off.' This is, of course, pure speculation, like the teaching for which he was compelled to leave Athens — that the sun is a red-hot ball — or his assertion of other inhabited worlds, or his curious theory that the world is an infinite mass of 'seeds,' each containing a portion of all things. And it is true that Anaxagoras was unable to develop his own theory. Mind to him was the Power that set the world going, watched its restless change, fertilized its seeds and was the essence of life, but once that is said there is again a dead stop. By itself, as Socrates was to point out, it gets one nowhere. And yet it is the nearest the Greek mind had yet come to the conception involved in the word *cosmos*, order. It was no small thing to propose as an hypothesis the idea of the universe as an orderly whole, created, vitalized, and controlled by infinite Intelligence. But like the doctrines of Heraclitus and Parmenides, the theory of Anaxagoras was not much more than a brilliant guess, significant in its courage and its implications, but vague and suggesting no way of going ahead to further and more explicit inquiry or application.

All of these doctrines were, in fact, shots in the dark. And yet Thales and his successors were the founders of European science. Their theories about the world were as speculative as anything in the Hesiodic or Orphic theology. They would not have understood in the least a modern scientist's interest in observed fact, for observed facts would have been of no use to them whatever. Their greatness was in their discontent with myths that had ceased to explain things and in the tentative drawing of a plan whose details were to be filled in by those who came after them.

The plan was the use of imaginative intelligence instead of

inherited stories. It proceeded by guesses because there was no other way to proceed. Like the Orphic belief in an earned immortality, the rightness of each guess could be tested only by its illuminating and explaining value, not by demonstration. But a guess at least implies the recognition of a problem, and intelligent guessing is to this day an indispensable tool in thinking — dignified by the name of postulate or hypothesis. Held too earnestly, hypothesis no doubt becomes faith and thereby to the scientific mind kills itself; i.e., it may be accepted so absolutely that to question it causes pain and rage as an intolerable blasphemy. Nevertheless, to the scientific thinker faith itself rests on a guess, an hypothesis, and whether the problems it tries to meet are metaphysical or physical, it must justify itself by results and submit to modification if a more satisfactory hypothesis appears.

The ‘guesses’ of Orphism were designed to meet and interpret moral and spiritual phenomena. Those of Thales and Anaximander physical phenomena. Those of their successors *all* phenomena, physical or metaphysical, mental and social. But whether held passionately or tentatively, whether expressed in proverbs or songs or tragedies or creeds or temples, they were an effort to reconsider a difficult and disorderly world in order to make it more livable. Prophets and scientists alike, each in his own way, were trying to see in myth and morals, stars and society, air and water, the origin and purpose of things, explanations that would make sense and bring the peace of reasonableness. It was not power over nature they were after, but understanding. They were driven by insatiable curiosity, not for new facts: that, for the most part, did not occur to them: but for relationships. Even in their philosophy they were artists, hunting for the

primal simplicities, the elements, the integrating *ideas* that lay behind life's complexities. Any suggestion was welcome that made for clearness.

Perhaps the most brilliant and most interesting of the pre-Socratic philosophers was the Italian Greek Pythagoras. In some respects he reminds one of Spinoza. He evidently had a gift for organization and leadership and leadership that the great Jew did not possess; but they were alike in their belief that reason and religion were not only reconcilable but necessary to each other. In Pythagoras and his followers the inquiring intelligence of the Ionians and the Eleatics was fused with the ascetic earnestness of the Orphics. To them the soul might by effort and sacrifice free itself and attain union with God, not only by fasting, by ritual, and by prayer, but by the contemplation of universal truth. Now it occurred to Pythagoras that at least one set of truths could be found in the world and considered absolute, no matter how unstable the actual things of sense might be, viz., the truths of mathematics. When we assert the basal principles of number we have something that does not change, a real revelation of the immutable and the divine, and so far as the universe may be intelligible at all it must be approached, thought Pythagoras, from this one sure starting-point. Such a suggestion is curiously alien to Hebrew and Christian thought; and yet the love of abstractions and universals is a form of intellectual asceticism; mathematics and mysticism are perhaps natural allies. And if we admit the idea of apprehending God through a study of His laws, a devout philosopher might find it reasonable to add that the laws most convincingly divine are those farthest removed from the changing and material facts of sensation. At any rate, Pythagoras

was at once an ascetic, a mystic, and a rationalist. And his mathematics led him to music, his asceticism to transmigration. To him the music of the spheres was not a baseless fancy, but a perfectly rational form of the world's harmony. And if one life must be too short for purification, why not a series of lives?

In so brief a summary must we tell the story — of more consequence to the world than the wars of a thousand years — of how these men and their co-workers delivered the mind of Hellas from blind tradition. The greatness of their labor and courage we can only dimly see as we try to face the same questions and realize how little we have added to their answers. It is true that those answers had not yet been fused into a synthesis that could have, as a doctrinal system, permanent solidity. But solidity in the sense of exactness and finality is the least significant test of spiritual value. What is notable in all of the suggestions from Thales to Pythagoras is, once more, the persistent effort to see more clearly, to think through the tangle of life to some kind of Cosmos, to escape from confusing detail and get at some ruling principle. The philosophers were applying to the universe, that is to say, the same test that artists and scientists applied to each particular phenomenon or problem. It is true that their results were crude. But many of the crudest generalizations of Heraclitus and Anaxagoras are no more crude than the similar efforts of present-day theologians. The mere fact of crudeness is, in fact, of no more consequence in itself than the broken outlines of a statue in the making. What mattered was the mental effort, the patient question, the forward movement, the belief that if they tried they could find the reasons for things and make life more rational and fruitful.

The quest was a difficult one. But its driving forces were tireless curiosity and unswerving faith.

Nevertheless, when we say that between the first Olympiad (776 B.C.) and the triumphant close of the Persian wars the Greek mind 'found itself,' the expression is open to question. If it means 'found the road that was to lead to the Parthenon, to Sophocles and to Plato and to a thousand years of primacy in arts and letters,' it is probably true enough, and with the finding of the road the rise of a magnificent self-confidence that was like a new birth. If it means an assured vision and final attainment, it is, of course, not true. Perfection of artistic form, the drive of conscious purpose and intelligent search, must not be thought of as either universal or consistent. There was no doubt as large a percentage of stupidity in any Greek city, even in Athens, as in London or in Boston; the Hellenes were consistent only in their art, not at all in their behavior at large; and the most gifted of them had their blind spots.

But however we temper our estimate of it the first quarter of the fifth century was one of History's great moments. The age of Elizabeth is perhaps the best modern parallel, but not the only one. In greater or less degree it often happens that when a vigorous stimulus occurs at the right crisis the developing genius of a people — as of an individual — takes on an accelerated pace, moves more rapidly to fruition, and finds new forms of expression that come with the exhilarating effect of surprises. It was so with the unexpected grandeur and power of *Æschylus*. And it was so a little later with sculpture. In the great year 480 — the year of Salamis — there seemed no limit to what was possible, and the very confidence of the victorious Athenians, if it confused their perspective, intensified their power.

Yet even in the glorious years after the Persian war, a Greek prophet might have looked anxiously at three terribly weak spots in his people's record. One affected the very roots of social health — the leaving of industry to slaves and the consequent ignoring both of economic problems and the application of science to the needs of daily life. A Greek would have had his answer to this; Aristotle did answer it, so far as he could, with his defense of slavery in the *Politics*; and he would have said that our criticism comes from an over-stress of our own and our blindness to the failure of both democracy and machine industrialism. But we might admit our failure and still reiterate our criticism. A second weakness, from our point of view, was an almost total lack of altruism, magnanimity, generosity — whatever we like to call it — a sort of arrogant and unconscious selfishness that was ignored by Greek moralists from first to last, an unsuspected flaw in an ethical system otherwise so noble. And a third was the failure of the too impatient, too stormy and restless Greek temper to apply to government the principle of *sophrosune*, self-control, a principle stated by poets and philosophers so clearly, applied to the arts so admirably, forgotten in politics so constantly.

This last, the inability of the Greeks to govern themselves, the political weakness that was the most direct cause of final ruin, Plato and Aristotle saw as clearly as we do — but in the fourth century, not the fifth. Their diagnosis and suggestions toward cure were not quite ours and were fruitless enough, but they saw the disease and the certainty of the outcome. Both of them lived after Athens had reached the peak of her greatness and had fallen. And it is the story of that rise and fall, so splendid and so tragic, that we must now tell.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *The Rise and Fall of the Athenian Empire*

TECHNICALLY Sparta had been the leader of the Greeks in repelling the Persian invasion. Actually the glory of the victory belonged chiefly to Athens. The Athenians, aided only by a small force contributed by the little city of Platæa, had borne the whole brunt of the battle of Marathon. And in the equally decisive sea fight of Salamis the part played by Sparta was insignificant, while the Athenian contingent of ships was incomparably the largest sent by any of the allied cities. Sparta had sacrificed a king at Thermopylæ and had done her share manfully at Platæa. But all Hellas knew that it was due mainly to Athens that the Persians had not conquered Greece.

The first definite sign of the attitude of the Greeks outside of the two cities concerned occurred during the operations of the allies at the Hellespont. It was vitally necessary that the capture of Sestos should be followed up by measures that would ensure for the future a safe passage between the *Aegean* and *Euxine*. The coastline of the Hellespont and the Bosphorus and the northern part of Asia Minor had to be cleared of Persian soldiers, the strategic points taken and held. And in this the sloth of the Spartans, the insolence and treachery of their leader Pausanius — the victor of Platæa — formed a painful contrast to the vigor of the Athenians, the honesty and courtesy of the Athenian general Aristides. Finally the allied Greeks took the matter into their own hands and resolved to accept the leadership of Athens. By

her own negligence and inability to use the great opportunity, Sparta, in spite of her undoubted military pre-eminence, had lost the headship of the islands and cities outside of the Peloponnesus.

And now was formed the famous union of the states that became the basis of an Athenian empire. Its prime purpose was to rid Greece of the Persian danger and to prevent its recurrence. Athens was its acknowledged leader, and its membership included nearly all of the island cities and those of the Thracian and Asiatic coasts, with a few from the mainland. It was a league of sea-powers, and the contribution of each member was reckoned in terms of ships. But many were too small to contribute more than part of the expense of a single ship, so that a money basis had to be devised and justly apportioned — a difficult task that was satisfactorily performed by Aristides, an Athenian of the best type, as universally respected for his integrity as Themistocles for his statecraft. The headquarters of the League, with the treasury, was fixed at the sacred island of Delos — the traditional birthplace of Apollo.

The Confederacy of Delos succeeded in its purpose. Its ships swept the *Ægean* from end to end, and the Phoenician sailors of Persia were driven from the Greek seas. At the battle of the Eurymedon (468 b.c.), Cimon, son of Miltiades, commander of the forces of the Confederacy, met and shattered the Persian fleet and army once more, winning for the Greeks the control of southern Asia Minor. But in the midst of triumphs there were signs of future trouble. The arms of the Confederacy were turned not only against the Persians but against Greek states that were unwilling to join the League and against two states — Naxos and Thasos

— who wished to secede. And it was inevitable that such proceedings should be viewed by some as signs of Athenian arrogance.

The Confederacy was indeed becoming an empire. The transfer of the treasury from Delos to Athens in 454 B.C. was only the most evident outward sign of that which everyone knew to be a fact, that the allies of Athens were really her subjects. It is easy enough to see how this came about. Many of the members of the League had from the beginning contributed money instead of ships. And as the sense of safety grew stronger and as the ships and men were needed for trade, more and more cities were eager to make an arrangement on a commutation basis. Athens was willing enough, willing even to make favorable terms, for it meant that she built, manned, and commanded the ships purchased. Unity of control meant both increased economy and increased efficiency. It might also mean something more sinister. That the fleet of the Confederacy should become an Athenian fleet was a serious menace to city independence. But if this was so the allies had themselves to thank for it. Athens was doing and doing well the work for which the League had been organized, and she might naturally claim the reward that was the result of her own enterprise, her own energetic and capable management, and the slackness of the confederates.

At the same time it became gradually more evident that as the necessity which had created the Confederacy became less pressing, the allies were growing less and less willing to submit to its bonds. Municipal patriotism was too firmly ingrained in the Greek character to permit of a free and permanent union, and the domination of one city — even though it might be the result of their own negligence and

selfishness — was a thing to be endured by the others more or less sulkily. The leader whom they had eagerly welcomed in time of danger they came to hate as she herself ensured their safety. Greece was passing through the first test of her power to achieve permanent unity since the days of Agamemnon. The signs all pointed to failure — a failure whose fault lay as much in the arrogance of Athens, in her blindness to the possibility of any union other than one under her control, as to the petty selfishness of her allies. And outside the League, watching sullenly and nursing her jealousy of the great sea-power that had supplanted her, stood Sparta.

We say ‘sea-power’ advisedly. On land the fighting strength of Athens was indeed far from negligible, and in one branch of the art of war — the attack on fortified places — she was recognized as the superior of Sparta herself. But on the sea she was without a rival. ‘Of the two divisions of the world accessible to man, the land and the sea, there is one of which you are absolute masters, and have, or may have, the dominion to any extent you please. Neither the Great King [of Persia] nor any nation on earth can hinder a navy like yours from penetrating whithersoever you choose to sail.’ So Pericles could address the Athenians a year after the Peloponnesian War had begun. And the city’s trade had increased with her sea-power. The expulsion of the Phœnicians from the *Ægean* which had been one result of the victory over Persia had given Athens an opportunity of which she hastened to take advantage. Her ships carried goods to Sicily, Carthage, and Etruria. Colonies were established under Athenian influence in South Italy, in Thrace, at Lemnos, and on the shores of the Euxine, as outposts of power and commerce.

The great period of the Confederacy and its evolution into an Athenian empire extended over, say, half a century (480-430 b.c.). And it was during these years of growing power and transcendent glory that Athens became the intellectual and artistic center of Greece. The city's fast-growing wealth, aided no doubt by the money of the Confederacy, or rather the surplus that economic and efficient management led Athens to consider her own, made possible the building of walls and temples and the adornment of the Acropolis on an unprecedented scale. Under the brilliant administration of Pericles, re-elected as *strategos* year after year from 461 b.c. until his death in 430, not only did Athens dominate lands and seas from Thrace to Cyprus, but she became the most beautiful city of the Greek world. Ictinus and Mnesicles built and Pheidias and Polygnotus adorned the Parthenon, the Propylæa, the Theseum, and the little temple of Nike Apteros — the Wingless Victory. The theater of Dionysus on the southeast slope of the Acropolis was made worthy of the masterpieces of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Sophists and students, poets and artists, drifted to Athens as to an intellectual center. And the glory of the wonder-city attained a dazzling radiance that seemed fadeless, that indeed has never since been equaled.

Nor was it greatly dimmed by the agony of war or by military disaster. Politically, the golden age of Athens cannot be said to have lasted more than the fifty years from the formation of the Confederacy of Delos to the war with Sparta. But the period of amazing fruitfulness in literature, art, and thought that we really have in mind when we speak of the 'golden age' extended far beyond the war that ended Athens' political greatness. Perhaps we might safely say that it is

applicable to the whole time between the production of the tragedies of Æschylus (about 490-456 B.C.) and the death of Plato (357 B.C.). The Erechtheum was built during the war. Sophocles, Euripides, and Aristophanes were all writing twenty years and more after the death of Pericles. Socrates survived the war five years and Xenophon and Plato far longer. The turn of the century saw no decline in art, and a modern lover of beauty may rank fourth-century sculptors like Praxiteles and Skopas with Pheidias himself. The exact definition of a period of spiritual fruitfulness is indeed seldom important. Certainly the bright glow of a people's genius is rarely to be dated by the aid of battles and revolutions. And it is worth while to remind ourselves of this before turning to the gloomy story of the Peloponnesian War.

Apart from considerations of mere jealousy there was no apparent reason for any collision between Athens and Sparta. Sparta was a military state; her influence was confined to the mainland of the Peloponnesus, and her sea-power and commercial interests were almost nil. The empire and wealth of Athens, on the other hand, were wholly based on her ships and merchants. But there were two elements in the situation that spelled grave danger. One lay in the intense party feeling that cleft in twain practically every city in Greece, the division between democrats and oligarchs. It was like the conflict of the Guelfs and Ghibellines in thirteenth-century Italy. The common modern hostility — temperamental as well as political and economic — between liberals and radicals and conservatives gives us but a faint and colorless impression of it, for it was passionate and implacable to a degree that we, fortunately for ourselves, find it hard to understand. Now Athens was democratic; Sparta oligarchic.

Athenian influence in any city meant the predominance of one party; Spartan, of the other. And the second danger lay in the Peloponnesian city of Corinth, an ally of Sparta, the second maritime and commercial state of Greece, the mother city of the great Sicilian colony of Syracuse, and a bitter rival of Athens in the western trade.

The causes of a great war are seldom simple, unless we regard civic and party hatred, national prejudices and ambitions, commercial rivalry, dislike of customs and methods other than our own, political distrust, a narrow inability to see things from an alien point of view, and a too easily awakened passion as simple things. The immediate occasion of the Peloponnesian War was a quarrel between Corinth and her colony Corcyra in which Athens rendered aid to Corcyra, followed by the revolt against Athens of the little town of Potidæa. Corinth, not daring to act alone, appealed for help to Sparta, accusing Athens of imperial ambitions. But when Sparta and Athens issued mutual ultimatums and prepared for war, it was quite evident that the cause was not the affair of Corcyra or that of Potidæa, but the fundamental distrust, jealousy, and dislike between two powerful, ambitious, and fundamentally unlike peoples.

Thucydides, whose history of the war has made its details famous quite out of proportion to their inherent importance, has preserved in a speech of the Corinthian envoys to Sparta an instructive contrast between the rival cities:<sup>1</sup>

You have considered, O Lacedæmonians, what manner of men are these Athenians with whom you will have to

<sup>1</sup> Thucydides, i, 70. How much of this speech was really uttered by a Corinthian and how much is really the voice of Thucydides himself we have no means of knowing. For our purposes it does not greatly matter.

fight, and how utterly unlike yourselves. They are revolutionary, equally quick in the conception and in the execution of every new plan; while you are conservative — careful only to keep what you have, originating nothing.... They are bold beyond their strength; they run risks which prudence would condemn; and in the midst of misfortune they are full of hope. Whereas it is your nature, though strong, to act feebly; when your plans are most prudent, to distrust them; and when calamities come upon you, to think that you will never be delivered from them. They are impetuous, and you are dilatory; they are always abroad, and you are always at home.... When an enterprise succeeds, they have gained a mere installment of what is to come; but if they fail, they at once conceive new hopes and so fill up the void. With them alone to hope is to have, for they lose not a moment in the execution of an idea.... To do their duty is their only holiday, and they deem the quiet of inaction to be as disagreeable as the most tiresome business. If a man should say of them, in a word, that they were born neither to have peace themselves nor to allow peace to other men, he would simply speak the truth.

Such is one picture of the Athenians in contrast to their enemies. We may now add another, also from Thucydides — contained in his report of the funeral oration delivered by Pericles over the graves of the first Athenians who perished in the war.<sup>1</sup>

It is true that we are called a democracy, for the administration is in the hands of the many and not the few. But while the law secures equal justice to all alike in their private disputes, the claim of excellence is also recognized; and when a citizen is in any way distinguished, he is pre-

<sup>1</sup> Thucydides, II, 37-41.

fferred to the public service, not as a matter of privilege but as a matter of merit. Neither is poverty a bar, but a man may benefit his country whatever be the obscurity of his condition.

Our military training is in many respects superior to that of our adversaries. Our city is thrown open to the world, and we never expel a foreigner or prevent him from seeing or learning anything of which the secret if revealed to an enemy might profit him. We rely not upon management or trickery, but upon our own hearts and hands. And in the matter of education, whereas they from early youth are always undergoing laborious exercises which are to make them brave, we live at ease, and yet are equally ready to face the perils which they face.

If then we prefer to meet danger with a light heart but without laborious training, and with a courage which is gained by habit and not enforced by law, are we not greatly the gainers?... For we are lovers of the beautiful, yet simple in our tastes, and we cultivate the mind without loss of manliness. Wealth we employ, not for talk and ostentation, but when there is a real use for it. To avow poverty with us is no disgrace; the true disgrace is in doing nothing to avoid it.

To sum up: I say that Athens is the school of Hellas, and that the individual Athenian in his own person seems to have the power of adapting himself to the most varied forms of action with the utmost versatility and grace. This is no passing and idle word, but truth and fact; and the assertion is verified by the position to which these qualities have raised the state. For in the hour of trial Athens alone among her contemporaries is superior to the report of her. No enemy who comes against her is indignant at the reverses which he sustains at the hands of such a city; no subject complains that his masters are unworthy of him. And we shall assuredly not be without witnesses; there are mighty monuments of our power

which will make us the wonder of this and of the succeeding ages. For we have compelled every land and every sea to open a path for our valor, and have everywhere planted memorials of our friendship and of our enmity.

That both Pericles and Thucydides were Athenians, and that their picture may accordingly be viewed as one-sided, is of course true. But the funeral oration of Pericles — which should really be read as a whole — shows, quite apart from any patriotic prejudice, the things valued by a popular Athenian statesman, the ideal of liberty, toleration, love of beauty, free mental activity, far-flung power based on merit, that Athens strove to realize. The ideals set forth by a statesman or an historian in addressing his own people may show bias and he may be blind to the degree of their non-realization. His enthusiasm may lead him to see dreams as facts, the best as the normal. But no man boasts of that which he and his hearers do not value. We may discount the boast, yet in showing us aims, motives, springs of action, it is apt to be essentially truthful. Pericles and Thucydides saw their city with the eyes of faith, no doubt. Yet we, of an alien race, of a far distant country, look back over twenty-three centuries and hesitate to say that the faith was not justified.

One doubt does indeed lurk in our minds as we read our Thucydides. Take, for example, the funeral speech of Pericles from which we have already quoted. In that speech he exalts many noble things, but the one thing he omits is what we call righteousness. The moral earnestness, the keen ethical vision, the lofty standards of *Æschylus*, of *Sophocles*, or of *Socrates* may open to question the contrast so often made between Hebraism and Hellenism in respect of right conduct. Yet this prophetic emphasis on righteousness, so stern and insistent in

Æschylus, we sadly miss in Thucydides. And if he was the relentlessly open-eyed interpreter of his age that he seems to be, then the Athenian, in his political life, was singularly and shamelessly unmoral.

The Melian dialogue of the fifth book is perhaps the best illustration of this, but it is paralleled by the defense of Athenian imperialism offered at Sparta by an Athenian ambassador: ‘Our empire was offered to us; can you wonder that, acting as human nature always will, we accepted it and refused to give it up again, constrained by three all-powerful motives, ambition, fear, interest? We are not the first who aspired to rule; the world has ever held that the weaker must be kept down by the stronger.’<sup>1</sup> So Diodotus, in arguing for a lenient treatment of the conquered Mitylenians, puts aside contemptuously the question of justice. ‘The question for us, rightly considered, is not, what are their crimes? but *what is for our interest?*’<sup>2</sup> And nothing in literature is more callous and intelligently brutal than the Athenian argument in the conference with the people of Melos. ‘You and we should say what we really think, and aim only at what is possible, for we both alike know that into the discussion of human affairs the question of justice enters only where the pressure of necessity is equal, and that the powerful exact what they can, and the weak grant what they must.’<sup>3</sup> All of which has a sinister sound, and must not be forgotten as we do honor to Athens.

The ideals of the Spartans we have already seen. Sparta was a military state. Her virtues were those of a soldier people, virtues by no means to be despised, firm courage, will-

<sup>1</sup> Thucydides, I, 76.

<sup>2</sup> Thucydides, III, 44.

<sup>3</sup> Thucydides, V, 85–111.

ing sacrifice to the public cause, simplicity of life, contempt for luxuries and frivolities, organized skill, aptitude for discipline, and a certain grave and deliberate prudence. They are the Puritan virtues, and unhappily, admirable as they are, they were associated among the Spartans as among the Puritans with a hard narrowness, an attitude of suspicion and contemptuous disapproval toward all outsiders, even toward the virtues of outsiders, virtues not their own. In respect of political morality there was perhaps little to choose between the two cities. But in loftiness of aim, in breadth of range, in ideals of life, Athens was incomparably the superior. Athens might have outgrown her arrogance. The defects of Sparta were part of her very texture.

The war between Athens and Sparta known as the Peloponnesian War lasted twenty-seven years, from 431 to 404 b.c. For the first ten years it would have been difficult for an on-looker to see which city had the advantage. Both won victories and both suffered defeats, the victories never decisive, the defeats never irreparable. Sparta was still invincible, or nearly so, on land and Athens at sea.

| Then Athens, in 415 b.c., resolved on a bold stroke. She sent a powerful expeditionary force against Syracuse, the great Sicilian colony of Corinth, as if to conquer Greece by asserting her supremacy over Greater Greece. No Greek city had ever equipped a force so potent, so splendid, and so famous. It seemed indeed an invincible armada, and Athens sent it forth with an enthusiasm that was almost intoxication, as if the sure victory over Syracuse was to be the beginning of glory and power beyond the dream of Pericles. It was, no doubt, a strategic mistake in any case, but it was made a catastrophe by the evil fortune that pursued it at every step.

The only one of its three leaders who might perhaps have carried it to success, Alcibiades, was recalled on a charge of impiety and took refuge in Sparta; the ablest and most experienced of the remaining generals was killed early in the siege; ill luck joined forces with unwise leadership; disaster followed disaster, and at last army and fleet gave up thought first of success, then of escape. Of the whole force not a man returned to Athens except, it is said, the few who could recite to the Syracusans some lines of Euripides.<sup>1</sup>

The defeat at Syracuse was the beginning of the end. The prestige of Athens had received a sore blow, and her allies began to drop away from her. Yet the imperial city, torn as she was by factions, menaced on land by a strong Spartan army in Attica and at sea by a navy — financed by Persian gold — now as formidable as her own, made so magnificent an effort to avert disaster that twice Sparta offered terms of peace that would have left the Athenian empire shorn only of the coast cities of Asia Minor. Her pride refused to allow her to accept such a treaty, and the recovery of the forts controlling the Bosphorus followed by a great naval victory (406 B.C.) near the islands of Arginusæ, south of Lesbos, seemed to leave the issue of the war still in doubt. But the rise of a great Spartan admiral, Lysander, settled the matter and settled it quickly. In the summer of the year 405, Lysander, by a skillful ruse, caught the Athenian fleet at hopeless disadvantage at Ægospotami in the Hellespont. Of one hundred and eighty ships only twenty escaped, and of these only twelve dared to bring the terrible news to Athens.

<sup>1</sup> It is this tradition that is used by Browning in *Balaustion's Adventure*, where Balaustion saves her companions' lives by rendering and interpreting to the Syracusans the *Alcestis* of Euripides.

'On that night not a man slept.'<sup>1</sup> Athens, her sea-power destroyed at a blow, expected an immediate attack. But Lysander took his time. He confirmed his victory by ensuring the submission of the cities of the Hellespont and the Thracian coast, and then with an overwhelming fleet entered the Saronic Gulf, occupied Ægina, and blockaded Athens. The city, her pride broken at last, sought to make peace on the humiliating condition that the Athenian Empire be wholly relinquished and Athens herself become an ally of Sparta. But even this was rejected by Lysander. And early in the year 404 b.c. the Peloponnesian War was closed by unconditional surrender and the tearing down of the long walls that connected the city with the Peiræus.

It was a victory of efficient militarism over democracy. To say this is, indeed, to state only part of the truth. Again and again Sparta made blunders that might have spelled ruin; again and again Athens achieved brilliant successes which might have meant complete victory. But on the whole the Peloponnesian forces were better organized, better led, less hampered by the hot-headed impulsiveness of politicians and easily swayed voters at home.

The free individualism which was Athens' glory was, after all, her ruin. The hasty condemnation and execution of the victorious generals of Arginusæ because of their failure to rescue the crews of some of their wrecked ships was only the most notorious instance of the utter inability of the Athenians to realize that even a righteous indignation should be tempered by a wise patience, that the voice of the people may be anything but the voice of God. The noble self-restraint,

<sup>1</sup> Xenophon, *Hellenica* — the narrative of a contemporary and our main source of information for the later years of the war.

the *sophrosune*, which the artists and poets had found to be a fundamental condition of ordered freedom, was never really well learned by the voters. Intellectual and keen in less troublous times, but in crises easily moved by anger or panic, prone to act on impulse, swayed this way and that by oratory, they illustrate all of the dangers of an unchecked democracy acting through an all-powerful assembly of the citizens. The more stolid, less passionate, more single-minded and better-disciplined Spartans, aided by the blind jealousy of the cities who had felt their independence threatened by Athens, won the victory because qualities that are good, but not at all essential, in peace, qualities that were indeed rather despised by the Athenians, are pre-eminently important in war.

Yet notwithstanding the grave faults of the Athenians, faults which stand out clearly in the pages of Thucydides and Xenophon as a lesson to all free peoples, the victory of Sparta was a victory of the less over the greater. It is true that Athens had not fully learned her own lessons. But on the whole she was moving along the right lines even though, as always, her political leaders and agitators lagged behind; and when her defeat and humiliation paid the penalty for her mistakes, her fall was the fall of the greatest of the Greek cities, greatest in spite of her ill-curbed passions, her impatience of restraint. She fell at the hands of a city to which the world owes nothing but the memory and example of two virtues — self-effacing patriotism, narrow and unfruitful but still admirable in its way and within its limits, and a dignified and austere simplicity that is akin to the Stoicism of later days. Add to these the remembrance of Sparta's long maintained military efficiency — barren to the world except for Platæa —

and the great Dorian city's message to us is complete. To compare Athens with Sparta is like comparing Shakespeare or Tolstoy with a drill sergeant. Sparta's victory and its result is a supreme example of the absurdity of war as a test of value.

## CHAPTER IX

### *The Intellectual Revolution in Athens*

OUR last chapter ended on a note of tragedy and loss. The fall of the Athenian Empire seemed to portend something more than the failure of a too ambitious city — as if military and political disaster might be the outward and visible sign of a spiritual ailment deep-seated and perhaps incurable. Or if not an ailment then a transformation, which may or may not mean the same thing. Is such a suspicion just? And if it is, then what was the matter?

It is almost inevitable that we should think of the Athens of Pericles as representing the peak of Hellenic civilization. In some respects it was so, no doubt. Nevertheless, the figure of speech is a little misleading. It obscures the fact that the actual Athens from Salamis to the Peloponnesian War was not a place of lofty, untouched serenity, but a place of turbulence and doubt, the peak of our metaphor capped with thunder-clouds and menaced by earthquakes. Or to put it plainly, the city, during its years of greatest splendor, was passing through the first stages of an intellectual and moral revolution.

Indeed it was that splendor of wealth, freedom, and exuberant consciousness of power that made an intellectual revolution inevitable and to some extent determined its character. But it is as futile to estimate it solely in the light of its political and economic causes as it would be with *Lear* or *Hamlet*. Its course and outcome were as simple, as subtle, as fateful as the course of a tragic drama. If the issue was calamitous, it was not so much through any evident and positive weak-

ness as through an excellence over-stressed, through the Hellenic passion for clearness, with its love of reducing formlessness to form, its impatience of imperfection and intolerance of mistakes. The change was going on during the eighty years after Salamis. It centered in the exaltation of criticism over creation, intelligence over imagination, analysis over 'the artist's dream,' reflection over initiative, victorious logic over adventurous generalization. More and more, to the best minds not of Athens only but of all Hellas, living came to be a complex of problems to be solved by thinking.

Even in Sophocles there were signs of this advance of 'reason.' In Euripides, the Sophists, and Socrates it became explicit. And in the long run its very explicitness killed it. As life became at once more rational and more complex, it became more sensitive to the contrast between fact and hope, between the orderliness of thought and the chaos of reality, so that human griefs became more conscious and indignant; while at the same time the search for clearness led to a sort of mental short-sightedness, an inability to see any but near things.<sup>1</sup> So intelligence brought its nemesis. But all this took a long time to work out, and in Plato and Aristotle and the sages of Alexandria the intellectual revolution was to go far toward justifying itself. As in all revolutions there was grave loss; but no one will deny that there was compensation, no matter how we may differ in our estimate of it.

## I

Sophocles was a boy when Salamis was fought. He grew to maturity in the Athens of the Delian Confederacy and the

<sup>1</sup> Compare the change in sculpture from the untroubled gods of the Parthenon to the tangle and terror of the Laocoön.

Empire. He did not live to see the fall of his city, but died in the year of Arginusæ, two years before the destruction of the long walls. At first sight it might seem vain to look to Sophocles for information about his own time. Seven of his works survive, but all seven are concerned with heroes who are as far removed from him in time and circumstance as Parsifal from Wagner or King Arthur from Tennyson.<sup>1</sup> Yet what has been said about the historical value of Homer is far more definitely applicable to Sophocles, partly because we know exactly when and where he lived and so can place him in his environment, and partly because his medium made it impossible for him to escape into the heroic past as completely as Homer did. He was a practical dramatist, and a popular one. His tragedies won prizes at the Dionysiac festivals and were acclaimed by thousands. No matter how remote from ordinary life convention required his heroes and plots to be, the odes and episodes of the drama by very necessity had to mean something to the average mind, had to be not only intelligible but in the main approved to win success. It was not a case of being applauded by a small group of critics and connoisseurs. Every tragedy was heard and judged by practically the whole city. The same thing is true of Æschylus and Euripides, of course. Nothing could so well reflect the serious flow of thought and value in fifth-century Athens as the dramas of these three poets, for they had to satisfy poet and audience too.

Now the tragic drama, from its very nature, was concerned with pitiful and terrible things, problems that shocked people

<sup>1</sup> The most convenient edition of Sophocles is the one edited, with English translations, by R. C. Jebb (Cambridge University Press). The translations are published separately in one volume.

into thinking, questions that awakened a horrified demand for an answer. An answer might not be given or even suggested, but in all the surviving tragedies of Æschylus and Sophocles there was a reaching out toward a moral order that would make the confusions of life less oppressive. And in Sophocles this amounted to a conviction — a conviction that the cause of human suffering is the clash between God's law and man's passion or carelessness, and that reconciliation is possible if men will only be more reasonable. Reverence for the gods and their laws is fundamental as with Æschylus. But the intense faith of the older poet is cooled into a philosophy. The gods who have learned their wisdom and attained their power through suffering, the half-human, passionate, and personal divinities of Æschylus, we do not meet in Sophocles. His gods are hardly anthropomorphic at all, but are dread powers who manifest themselves in 'those laws of range sublime brought forth in the wide, clear sky, whose birth is of Olympus alone; which no brood of mortal men begot; which forgetfulness shall never lay to sleep. Strong in these is the God and grows not old.'<sup>1</sup> Every one of the seven extant dramas illustrates the inexorableness of divine law, an inexorableness so absolute that it is often oppressive, dreadful, like Fate, in its mysterious power. 'There is no deliverance from it by wealth or by war, by fenced city or dark sea-beaten ships.'<sup>2</sup>

This is not to say that Sophocles was a Stoic or a Calvinist, sternly intent on the majesty of an all-pervasive divine sovereignty to which man's only attitude should be that of humil-

<sup>1</sup> *Oedipus Rex*, 865, Jebb's translation, p. 34. See also *Antigone*, 605–14.

<sup>2</sup> *Antigone*, 952, Jebb's translation, p. 155.

ity and obedience. His divine law is saved from fatalism by its justice and reasonableness, by a faith in a final harmony that is less impressive than that of Æschylus only because it is less emotionally intense, more rational. It is not nearly as mechanical as later thought made it. ‘When men scorn godliness and turn to frenzy’ there will indeed come upon them the slow but sure ‘visitation of the gods.’<sup>1</sup> But this is simply the necessary result of a rational and well-ordered world. It could not be otherwise. To ignore evil would be to strike harmony into discord. Thistles cannot bring forth figs; neither can sin and folly lead to blessings. But this does not forbid the hope that the pain that follows sin may also cleanse. Sure as we are that it is his own folly that has crushed him, the overwhelming shame of Ajax, brought to ruin by his immoderate anger and his scorn of Athena, awakens not virtuous satisfaction but compassion. The farewell of the fallen hero is full of pathos, full of a sad — if bitter — recognition of his fault, ending with the cry — ‘For I will go now whither I must pass, but do ye what I bid; and perchance, though now I suffer, ye will hear that I have found rest.’ So too the woes of Œdipus end in reconciliation and in a ‘passing... not with lamentations or in sickness and suffering, but above mortals, wonderful.’<sup>2</sup> ‘Many were the sorrows that came to him without cause,’ chanted the chorus, ‘but in requital, a just god shall lift him up.’<sup>3</sup>

‘Not with lamentations.’ It is a compassion that is not so much soft-hearted as sensible and sensible because just. For Sophocles’ conviction of divine justice is not that of a logician or a lawyer: justice to a logician may be a barren

<sup>1</sup> *Œdipus at Colonus*, 1536; Jebb’s translation, p. 115.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1565; Jebb, p. 119.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1563, Jebb, p. 116.

form of words and the lawyer's justice may be injustice to the Lord. Man being man — a god imprisoned in flesh — no scheme of things would be just that discouraged human initiative or rewarded even misguided courage with ruin. Justice without mercy is not justice. So that what was a stumbling-block to later theologians troubled Sophocles not at all; the word 'almighty' had not yet come in to challenge the word 'freedom'; and the liberty and power of man was just as sure as the orderliness of God. Hamlet's eulogy of man is often pointed to as an illustration of the exuberant consciousness of human capacities, the new pride and hope that characterized the English Renaissance. Even so does Sophocles give voice to the exultant pride of men to whom nothing seemed impossible, men who had humbled the might of Persia and were building the Parthenon.

Wonders are many, but nothing is more wonderful than man, that power which walks the whitening sea before the stormy south wind making a path amid engulfing surges.... And the careless tribe of birds, the nations of the angry beasts, the deep sea's ocean brood he snares in the meshes of his woven wiles, he leads captive, man excellent in wit.... And speech, and wind-swift thought, and all the words that mould a state hath he taught himself; and how to flee the shafts of frost beneath the clear, unsheltering sky, and the arrows of the stormy rain. All providing is he; unprovided he meets nothing that must come.<sup>1</sup>

So that seeing life as rational does not mean seeing life as mechanical. There is no question of blind necessity. If men suffer, it is — as we say in our vernacular — because

<sup>1</sup> *Antigone*, 332, Jebb, p. 135; but I have preferred here what seems a slightly finer translation by the same scholar in his essay on the Genius of Sophocles, *Lectures and Essays*, p. 27.

they ask for it. It is not the fault of either an angry god or an uncaring cosmos. There are laws, i.e., fundamental facts of cause and effect, and impatient persons defy or ignore them and the result is what we call tragedy. But if life is tragic, it is not unthinkable or intolerable, as it would be if there were no laws at all — or if the laws were so absolute that every move of the players in the human drama became automatic.

Thus the terrible happenings of the *Antigone* came from perfectly familiar and intelligible faults and virtues. Antigone perishes in the collision between divine law and kingly arrogance, but there is nothing arbitrary or foreordained about it: she makes her own decision alike in her stubborn refusal to bow to the will of Creon, and in her suicide. Like Romeo, she could have lived if she had yielded less hastily to her seeming fate, and her unnecessary death destroys Hæmon and Eurydice as well as herself. At the end even our anger against Creon is changed to compassion, so utter is his desolation, so nearly did his late repentance atone for his cruelty. It is a pity that people will do these things. And every drama sets forth the ideals of life that would help men to be happier — loyalty, reverence, mercy to the suppliant, and above all the *sophrosune* that would have saved Ajax, Creon, and Antigone, that made possible the reconciliation of Philoctetes with the Greek host, and that moved Odysseus in his fine attitude toward the dead Ajax. They are the typical Hellenic virtues, as old as Homer and Hesiod, but given by Sophocles a beauty — the beauty of reasonableness — that Hesiod never saw.

That is to say, the religion of Sophocles is on the way to being rationalized and humanized, its theology intellectual rather than emotional, its deepest feeling stirred more by his

men and women than by his gods. Now and then he does seem to wonder whether the actual arrangement of things is not a little less merciful, more brutal than he presents it, whether the gods in being always rational are not sometimes inhuman, unnecessarily consistent. Certainly there seem to be moments when he comes dangerously near to criticism of the traditional gods, just near enough for us to see his faith in their rightness strained to the breaking point in the face of so much actual wrongness.<sup>1</sup> These glimpses of incipient revolt occur rarely in Sophocles, and may be purely dramatic. But they show us the dangerously widening gap between the old theology and the new critical thinking — the old bottles cracking as the new wine fermented. At any rate, we seem to come in Sophocles to a sort of turning-point in Greek thought. As Edward Caird has pointed out in speaking of Dante, the one thing that no doctrine and no system can stand is perfect interpretation. ‘When the soul becomes visible the body is ready to drop away.’ To such a moment had Athens and Hellas come with the production of the *Antigone*, the *Electra*, and the *Oedipus Rex*.

## II

But Sophocles himself, like Dante, was an interpreter, not a rebel. The rebellion came with Euripides and the

<sup>1</sup> So *Philoctetes*, 446–54: ‘No evil thing has been known to perish; no, the gods take strange care of such, and have a strange joy in turning back from Hades all things villainous and knavish, while they are ever sending the just and good out of life. How am I to deem of these things, when praising the ways of the gods I find that the gods are evil.’ And the bitter words of the son of Heracles, Hyllus, in *Trachiniae*, 1267–72: ‘Mark the great cruelty of the gods in the deeds that are being done. They beget children, they are hailed as fathers, and yet they can look upon such suffering. No man foresees the future; but the present is fraught with mourning for us, and with shame for the powers above.’

**Sophists.** No contrast in Greek literature is more impressive than the contrast between Euripides and Æschylus. Aristophanes expresses the situation in the *Frogs* when he makes the shades of Æschylus and Sophocles embrace, each willing to yield the throne of poetic supremacy to the other, while both dispute the claim of Euripides. He stood for something that neither Æschylus nor Sophocles could approve — a sympathy with human suffering so intense that a compromise with the gods is impossible, the reinterpretation of the old traditions a quibbling with the truth. The time had come when a mind of the earnest, uncompromising type could feel simply that the old tales were true or false, and that if one were allowed to sift, to take and leave, as Pindar did, one might as well begin all over again on a new basis, and when the chorus chants the dread cry, ‘The worship of the gods is perishing,’<sup>1</sup> add the assenting words, ‘Let it even be so.’

Euripides might not have gone this far, indeed. But he certainly refused to do anything but take the traditional gods as the traditions paint them. The effort of Pindar and Æschylus to give the old religion new power by transforming and idealizing it, to revivify the ancient Bible of the race, so to speak, by cutting out some portions as untrue and inadequate, had no meaning for Euripides. He stubbornly draws the gods on the old lines and in doing this he condemns them. The cry of Hyllus<sup>2</sup> would serve as a text for Euripides. Heracles, the friend of man, driven mad and made the slayer of his children by the malice of Hera — a malice condemned even by the Madness which is sent to work the mischief — Creusa brutally betrayed and deserted by Apollo, Phædra

<sup>1</sup> *Oedipus Rex*, 910.

<sup>2</sup> See footnote, p. 168.

wantonly inspired by Aphrodite to the unholy love that killed her — these were the works of the gods.

There is one story that all three poets made the basis of a tragedy, the story of Orestes, son of Agamemnon, and the contrast is striking.

The command given by Apollo to Orestes that he avenge his father's murder by slaying his mother the murderer, Æschylus and Sophocles had regarded as most terrible, indeed, but absolutely just. Even as Clytemnestra's Furies descend upon her son, no thought that he had done wrong comes to the mind of Orestes. But in the story as Euripides tells it the avenging brother and sister collapse in utter remorse. They stand over the body of their mother in an agony of repentance. And when Castor and Pollux appear on the scene they voice the thought that would be uppermost in the minds of the spectators: 'With justice vengeance falls on her; in thee unholy is the deed. Yet Phœbus — but, my king is he, I will be silent; yet, though wise, he gave to thee response not wise: but I must praise perforce these things.' Orestes and Electra had done an 'unholy' thing. But the god who had urged them to it was more unholy still.

The rebellious questionings of Euripides were not, of course, wholly new. Like all revolutionary utterances they had their forerunners, and many an Orphic or Pythagorean disciple had already rejected the old tales. But Euripides drove his points home with a new passion in a succession of deadly pictures of the evils that the gods do, in insidious and undermining doubts as to the truth of the old myths, in penetrating hints that faith is the handmaid of immorality. Essentially irreligious, indeed, Euripides is not. Impatient as he is with many of the old beliefs, he often recurs in a half-wistful

way to the religion of his fathers, purged of its ugliness, and in one beautiful fragment he prays Zeus 'to send light to the souls of men, to those who would fain be forewarned whence sorrow springs, and where evil has its root, that they may know what deity to implore, and so obtain rest from their troubles.'<sup>1</sup>

'Euripides the human,' Mrs. Browning calls him, and the word has some truth. Yet an admirer of Sophocles would say that he was human too, as human as Euripides and in a higher sense. Tears there are in mortal things surely. No one knew it better than the poet who had told the woes of Oedipus, the tragedy of Antigone's end, the bitter shame of Ajax. There were times when the sorrows of life were almost too much even for Sophocles.<sup>2</sup> But it is true, nevertheless, that 'he saw life steadily and saw it whole,' the little things as little, the great things as great, sufferings and death itself — overwhelming as they might be for the moment — as yet less than the conquering Something which man and life meant to him. His idealism is concentration on that which really counts. But in Euripides the storms and struggles of men as he sees them too often obscure what they are struggling for, and to that extent Euripides is a sign of the clouding of the Greek spirit, a falling away from the high faith in man's divinity, a compassion that saddens without breathing on discouraged men and women the vital breath that will inspire them to victory and peace.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Haigh, *The Tragic Drama of the Greeks*, pp. 261–71.

<sup>2</sup> As when he puts into the mouth of the chorus of the *Oedipus at Colonus* the lament of Theogons: 'Not to be born is past all prizing best; but when man has seen the light, this is next best by far, that with all speed he should go thither whence he hath come.'

<sup>3</sup> And, if Dr. Verrall is right, a mocking rationalism. See his *Euri-*

## III

Because every drama was heard by thousands, the relaxing, corroding genius of Euripides may well have had a peculiarly widespread influence toward restlessness. But hardly less effective as a disintegrating force was the frankly common-sense skepticism of the Sophists. These were traveling teachers who served much the same purpose in the fifth-century Greek world that our colleges and universities do with us. They taught as individuals, not as members of a corporation, and they evidently varied greatly both in interest and gifts; yet, rising as they did in response to a definite and urgent need, it is very probable that in a general way they had the common characteristics that our evidence ascribes to them, evidence, curiously enough, that is nearly all hostile.

It was no doubt the intense political consciousness of the Greeks in general and of the dominant city in particular after Salamis that determined the character of the Sophistic teaching — its strength and its weakness. Athens was the mistress of half Greece, and Athens was ruled by her citizens. The thing to do was to learn the art of dealing with men, the art of logic, of persuasion, of eloquent and convincing speech. Rhetoric and argumentation, with a sufficient knowledge of human nature and politics — These were the fields of study befitting a really alive and ambitious young man.

Which of course had its point, and so far the instruction given by a good Sophist was no more open to criticism than a course in a modern business college or school of expression.

*pides the Rationalist* — a most interesting and instructive book throughout. The best complete translation of Euripides is that of A. S. Way in three volumes, but the student is recommended to read Gilbert Murray's translations so far as they are available and add his little book on Euripides in the Home University Library.

Indeed, the Sophists generally could honestly declare their purpose to be the teaching of wisdom, virtue, good citizenship.<sup>1</sup> The destructive effect ascribed to their teaching apparently lay, not in their practical character, but in their denial of any truth beyond the practical, in their way of solving the problems of ultimate truth and virtue by denying both. The very words *ultimate*, *fundamental*, *absolute*, were to them empty of all real meaning. ‘Man is the measure of all things, of the existence of the things that exist and the non-existence of the things that do not exist.’<sup>2</sup> ‘Justice is interest of the stronger.’<sup>3</sup> Such were the two most famous Sophistic maxims that have come down to us. If anyone asks what becomes of the gods if we make man the measure of truth, and truth not only purely relative but a matter of sight and touch, ‘Protagoras or someone in his behalf will make reply: O excellent good people, youth and old men, you sit in solemn session and appeal to vulgar prejudice in making the gods the center of your argument, when their very existence is open to doubt and any mention of them in speech or writing should be avoided.’<sup>4</sup>

The point is not that this irritated conservative minds, but that it reflected a movement far-reaching and momentous. It may be that we should discount the complaint of Plato and Aristotle that the whole Sophistic tendency was negative.<sup>5</sup> And we may not share Plato’s conviction that the

<sup>1</sup> Plato, *Protagoras*, 315–19; *Gorgias*, 455–59.

<sup>2</sup> Plato, *Theaetetus*, 152.

<sup>3</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 335.

<sup>4</sup> Plato, *Theaetetus*, 162. For a clear and thoughtful discussion of this matter see Dyde, *The Theaetetus of Plato*, Introduction, p. 19, and Watson, *Hedonistic Theories*, chapter 1.

<sup>5</sup> ‘While the philosopher is ever devoted to the idea of the absolutely existent, and thus lives in a region which is dark only from excess of

doctrine of the relativity of truth and virtue was equivalent to their denial.<sup>1</sup> What does seem clear is that not only by their revolutionary metaphysics,<sup>2</sup> not only by their gospel of self-interest, but by the abandonment of the idealism which is the very soul of the Hellenic genius, they shook Athenian civilization to its very foundations. Yet at the same time the whole movement, in its keen iconoclasm, its joy in questioning and debate, its very profanation of things sacred, was inevitable. And among the Sophists, classed with them and hated like them by the conservative poet Aristophanes, dying for the skepticism that up to a certain point he shared with them, was one of the supremely great and fascinating figures of all time.

#### IV

Socrates was born a few years after Salamis and Plataea.<sup>3</sup> He was thus a boy of nine or ten years when Pericles entered on his long tenure of power, a man of forty when the Parthenon was completed, about twenty-six years younger than Sophocles and ten years than Euripides. He saw Athens belight, the Sophist, on the other hand, takes refuge in the murky light of the nonexistent.' (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, vi, ii, 4.)

<sup>1</sup> Cf. for instance, *Republic*, i, 338, *Cratylus*, 386, and *Theætetus* all through.

<sup>2</sup> 'Nothing exists: if it does it cannot be known: if it can be known it cannot be communicated.' This proposition was ascribed to Gorgias, one of the most famous of the Sophists. Cf. Grant, *Ethics of Aristotle*, i, Essay II.

<sup>3</sup> He was about seventy years old at the time of his trial in 399 B.C., which places his birth at about 470 B.C. See *Apology*, 17, and *Crito*, 32. The quickest way to get a first-hand picture of Socrates is to read Church's *Trial and Death of Socrates*, in Macmillan's Golden Treasury Series or Paul Elmer More's little book in The Riverside Literature Series of Houghton Mifflin Company. Both have interesting and illuminating introductions.

come the first city of Greece, matchless in beauty as in power. He took part in the battles of the Peloponnesian War and tried to avert doom from the ill-fated generals of Arginusæ. Finally he saw the fall of Athens and heard the triumphant music of the Spartan flutes as the long walls were torn down. He took a citizen's part in the intense life of Athens from her age of glory and intoxicating self-confidence, through the age of doubt and angry disillusionment to the age of disaster and collapse, and he saw the change from the supreme faith of *Æschylus* to the half-conscious questionings of Sophocles and the rebellious agnosticism of Euripides.

But if he was a part of his city, discussing, voting, fighting, working at his trade — not too industriously, for he was a friendly, sociable person who much preferred talking to chipping marble and so remained a poor man — he was also an irrepressible critic. Profoundly unlike as he was to men like Voltaire and Bernard Shaw and H. L. Mencken — themselves profoundly unlike one another — he yet was of their tribe in his urge to take the mask off words, customs, beliefs, conventions of whatsoever kind, to see what there was beneath them. Nothing is more exasperating to conventional minds. And since a large part of our mental and moral structure is conventional, built and held together by habit rather than reason, he seemed to many anxious souls as destructive as Gorgias or Protagoras.

He himself protested against this as a total misapprehension. He was not a professional teacher; he was not in the least 'practical' in the Sophistic sense; he believed that truth and goodness were absolutely real, attainable, and indispensable. But they were not as obvious as most people seemed to think. A great deal that was regarded as truth he

suspected to be false, and he was quite sure that bowing down to 'idols' was ruinous.<sup>1</sup> Inquiry was a necessary way of finding out whether a thing was true and good or just an obscuring form of words. His purpose was not to destroy, but to ascertain and examine the ideals of his city, to avert — by opening his fellow-countrymen's eyes — the spiritual collapse that might follow a blind and vainglorious self-confidence, and to turn the superficial and hasty skepticism of an age of change into an honest and uncompromising search for truth.

In this endeavor Socrates failed. Except for a small group of disciples, his people refused to hear him and finally, in a burst of rage, condemned him to death. To adapt what Gilbert Murray has said of Euripides: 'His contemporary public denounced him as... malignant because he made them see truths they wished not to see, as blasphemous and foul-minded because he made demands on their religious and spiritual natures which they could neither satisfy nor overlook.' But he had sown his seed, and the pupils who loved him watered and cared for it. Not only were his memory and his message enshrined in the dialogues of Plato,<sup>2</sup> but teacher after teacher sprang up in every city of the Greek world to

<sup>1</sup> There is no better commentary on the purpose of Socrates than Francis Bacon's account of the 'idols' that divert men's minds from worship of the truth, in his *Novum Organum*, xxxvii–lxx. In Bacon's way of putting it Socrates was engaged in a lifelong crusade against the 'idols of the market-place.'

<sup>2</sup> And the *Memorabilia* of Xenophon — a book of reminiscences that is really a sort of defense of Socrates against the charge that he corrupted the youth of Athens. Xenophon had certainly seen and talked to Socrates, but his account presents us with a dilemma, for if his portrait is accurate, then Plato's is not. There is no need to argue the matter here, but we prefer to rely on Plato, and in this chapter Socrates is the Platonic Socrates.

carry on — sometimes, it is true, in extravagant form — some phase of the ethical doctrine of Socrates. His teaching in one form or another, inextricably entangled as it was with that of Plato, became the greatest single moral force in the world up to the coming of Christianity. What, then, was the teaching of Socrates? What was the source of its power, and why did it arouse antagonism?

The essential principles which he followed in his search he summed up himself when he was on trial for his life. It is difficult to state them adequately without quoting the whole of the *Apology*. Two extracts, however, may give us the essence of the matter. The suggestion is made that he may be acquitted if he will cease his teaching and confine his energies to his trade as a maker of images.

Athenians [he answers], I hold you in the highest regard and love; but I will obey God rather than you; and as long as I have breath and strength I will not cease from philosophy, and from exhorting you, and declaring the truth to every one of you whom I meet, saying, as I am wont, ‘My excellent friend, you are a citizen of Athens, a city which is very great and very famous for wisdom and power of mind; are you not ashamed of caring so much for the making of money, and for reputation, and for honor? Will you not think or care about wisdom, and truth, and the perfection of your souls?’ For [he adds a little later], if you put me to death, you will not easily find another man to fill my place. God has sent me to attack the city, as if it were a great and noble horse, to use a quaint simile, which was rather sluggish from its size, and which needed to be aroused by a gadfly; and I think that I am the gadfly that God has sent to the city to attack it; for I never cease from settling upon you, as it were, at every point, and rousing, and exhorting, and reproaching each man of you all

day long. You will not easily find anyone else, my friends, to fill my place; and if you take my advice you will spare my life. You are vexed, as drowsy persons are when they are awakened, and, of course, if you listen to Anytus, you could easily kill me with a single blow, and then sleep on undisturbed for the rest of your lives, unless God were to care for you enough to send another man to arouse you.

The distinctive difference between Socrates and the Sophists seems to have been in his conviction that virtue was a reality, truth also a reality, each necessary to the other and both fundamental.<sup>1</sup> Yet if the Athenians had been convinced of this, they would hardly have condemned him to death. Men may not follow virtue, but as a rule they at least respect it. No martyr has been killed simply because he was good or because he taught others to be good. There must have been in the minds of the Athenians a feeling that on the whole Socrates did harm, not good; and the reason for this lies in his method. The ordinary teacher of today is a teacher because he is supposed to know certain things, which things he seeks to convey to others, or he is supposed to have skill in certain directions, which skill he tries to impart to his pupils. Now Socrates openly avowed that he had neither knowledge nor skill and that he was not a teacher in the usual sense. He knew, indeed, that he was considered a wise man — that the Delphic oracle had even pronounced him

<sup>1</sup> The modern sense attached to the word 'virtue' has about it, perhaps, something negative, almost anaemic. If so, it is to that extent a bad translation of the Greek word *arete* and a most unworthy derivative from the Latin word *virtus*. *Aretē* is not conformity, obedience, respectability, or morality. It is 'that quality in an agent by virtue of which it does its particular work well.... Thus, whatever else "a good man" may mean, it must mean a man who does his work well, a man who *lives well*.' (A. L. Nettleship, *Lectures on Plato's Republic*, p. 35.)

the wisest of all men. He had heard this and taken it as a jest, but in order to prove the oracle wrong he went to man after man who claimed to be wise, questioned them carefully, and was confounded by the discovery that they were not wise but foolish. So as he went away from each man he made this curious reflection: 'I am wiser than this man. Neither of us probably knows anything that is really good, but he thinks that he has knowledge when he has not, while I, having no knowledge, do not think that I have. I seem, at any rate, to be a little wiser than he is on this point, I do not think that I know what I do not know.'

To the Athenians this was nonsense and Socrates simply a destructive skeptic. That which men thought they knew, that which they comfortably hugged as wisdom, dissolved into haze and ignorance at the touch of his penetrating analysis. Even worse, for that wisdom which faded into foolishness before his questions he substituted nothing. From first to last he protested his own ignorance. If those who came to him desired wisdom, he would join them in the search, but he could not give them that which he did not himself possess. To the charge of destructiveness he simply answered that he destroyed nothing, that if on examination that which had seemed true proved inadequate or false, the fault was not his, and that if they preferred blindness to sight they need not converse with him. If they were happier in their ignorance, then so much the worse for them. As for him, it was his duty to be God's gadfly and to sting them into mental and spiritual activity by opening their eyes to their own foolishness.

He did not tell them, indeed, wherein they were foolish. He told them nothing whatever. He simply asked questions

relentlessly until they were compelled perforce to formulate their knowledge and to see its inadequacy for themselves. Often this made them angry — the anger of disillusionment. But to the braver and stronger minds the ‘torpedo shock’ which brought a realization of ignorance was a stimulus to noble endeavor. ‘Indeed, I am far from wise,’ Plato makes him say in the *Theaetetus*, ‘nor has my mind ever given birth to any truth at all. Yet some of those who come to me are at first quite ignorant, and as our acquaintance grows they, if favored by God, progress in a way which astonishes themselves and others. It is true that they have learned nothing from me; wholly of themselves have they made many notable discoveries; yet in this I am the instrument in the hands of God.’

His ordinary procedure was to innocently ask for a definition of some word used by one of his companions — some commonly used word such as friendship, justice, courage, holiness, beauty, or temperance. The definition given was subjected to an examination apparently of the most informal, naïve, innocent kind. By degrees it had to be modified until it crumbled at last and disappeared. Another was substituted and was treated in like manner. The result was a puzzled realization either of ignorance or of an unexpected inability to formulate what the disputant still thought he knew. At any rate, the ordinary self-satisfied assumption of knowledge was shaken.

Thus Laches, a veteran general of tried courage, is questioned concerning the nature of courage. He is driven from one definition to another until he is forced to a certain amused sympathy with his puzzlement. ‘I am unused to investigations of this sort,’ he breaks out at last, ‘but the spirit of

controversy has been aroused in me by what has been said; and I am really grieved at thus being unable to express my meaning. For I fancy that I do know the nature of courage; but somehow or other she has slipped away from me, and I cannot get hold of her and tell her nature.' Socrates himself is fully aware of the humor of the situation. 'Here is a jest,' he cries to his two young friends, Lysis and Menexenus, with whom he has been discussing, apparently in vain, the nature of friendship — 'Here is a jest. You two boys, and I, an old boy who would fain be one of you, imagine ourselves to be friends, and we have not as yet been able to discover what a friend is.'

But this did not spring from a mere whimsical love of analysis. Back of all this questioning lay a fundamental ethical principle — that virtue and wisdom are identical, that no man knowingly pursues evil or prefers evil to good. Thus, let us say, I do wrong for the sake of a gross pleasure that overcomes me. Is the pleasure evil in itself or because of the resulting harm? Obviously the latter. If the resulting harm were as vivid to my mind as the immediate pleasure, would I yield to the temptation? Probably no, any more than I would taste the most delicious fruit if I knew that in its sweetness is hidden a deadly poison. Then I do wrong apparently because the pleasure is immediate and vivid, the evil remote, vague, and easily put aside.

But if I insist that the moon is larger than the stars, the trouble is not that my eyes are bad, but that my sense of perspective is untrained. I do not need an oculist, but someone who will teach me to add to my eyesight knowledge and judgment. So if I see clearly the present pleasure and allow it to outweigh a much greater future evil, it is not that my soul is

vicious, but that I lack perspective and need to be trained in a certain art of measurement. The nearness of the moon does not deceive the astronomer; the nearness of pleasure does not deceive the wise man. The one discounts the evidence of his eyes; the other discounts the vividness of the temptation. If I am properly taught, pleasure and pain, good and evil, will appear to me not with the accidental vividness or vagueness of present or future time, of nearness or remoteness, but in their true character and proportions. He who is wise then will as unerringly choose the good and put aside the evil as the cautious traveler will follow the path and avoid the rocks or brambles.<sup>1</sup> So Socrates, as a teacher of virtue, made it his effort to find the true nature of temperance, courage, and justice. The better they were understood, the more clearly their beauty could be seen, the more surely would they be followed. Hence the deeply significant remark in the *Phædo* that 'a wrong use of words is not merely an error in itself, but creates evil in the soul.'

We of today know that the result was not altogether happy. If there had been a prophet among the companions who fell under the charm of the Master's dialectic, he might have looked ahead somewhat disconsolately to the battles of the schools that were to make philosophy so fascinating and so barren for ages to come. It would be unjust, indeed,

<sup>1</sup> 'He said that justice, moreover, and all other virtue is wisdom. That is to say, things just and all things else that are done with virtue are beautiful and good, and neither will those who know these things deliberately choose aught else in their stead; nor will he who lacks the special knowledge of them be able to do them, but if he makes the attempt he will miss the mark and fail.' (Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, iii, ix, 4.) The argument is presented most fully and clearly in the *Protagoras* of Plato.

to put all the blame for this on Socrates. The mental restlessness of the fourth century was not due to any one man any more than was its moral and political failure. It sprang on the one hand from a sort of anxiety and nervous discontent, from the passing of old faiths and the feverish grasping at new ones that were elusive and debatable; on the other hand from the gossip and diversity and shifting contacts of trade, travel, and war. In telling the story of the new Greece that emerged after the Persian war, one tends to stress the onset of criticism. But the criticism was not so much passionate or belligerent as puzzled — a matter of speculation and discussion rather than of attack and defense. And indispensable as discussion was and is, it does tend to issue in dogma, in rationalizing, and in verbal hair-splitting — gods falser and more dangerous than the Olympians. The Greek mind was still to produce great things, but from the stimulating confusion of the age of Socrates was to come the long reign of Dialectic, Rhetoric, and Theology.

Moreover, behind the controversies and implied in them was a change that affected all the disputants alike, a change in valuation, in what was considered interesting and important. Beliefs, taboos, values are all — as we recognize now, but as the Greeks never did — responses to situations; however firmly established they seem to those who hold them, they change as the situations change; old ideas and institutions fade almost imperceptibly before no enemy but the ebb and flow of circumstance. And this is a disaster only if the dissolution is accompanied by failure in reconstruction. Now such a failure does seem to cloud the story of the Greeks after the fall of Athens and the death of Socrates. It was not a complete failure or a sudden and spectacular one, but some-

thing was being lost from the Greek genius that the Greeks themselves were content to replace by toys and puzzles, by formulas and speeches, by prettiness and pedantry. It was not the fault of Socrates. Neither could he have prevented it. But it could be contended that he made matters worse instead of better by trying the wrong cure, identifying philosophy so largely with critical analysis and verbal precision.

On the other hand, if dialectic was the wrong cure, it was the only one there was and was worth trying. As if a surgeon were tempted to meet a fatal disease by a fatal operation, on the chance that some unknown element, some miraculous resurgence of vitality, might come in to save. There is no ground for supposing that Socrates judged the disease of his people to be fatal — but perhaps Plato did. And it seems now that it was, that the superstructure of Greek civilization had reached an absolute limit with the foundation it had, that to re-examine the foundation was to accelerate the collapse of the whole edifice, that creative faith had come to be so interpenetrated with complacency that to cure one was to kill the other. One may be permitted to wonder whether even the magnificent funeral speech of Pericles did not show a danger more deadly than anything threatened by the Sophists and Socrates. Granting that every word of it was true, it is yet full of *hubris*, the perilous pride that goeth before a fall, the arrogant self-approval that is the surest provocation of rebellion, the surest invitation to catastrophe.<sup>1</sup>

Quite without knowing it, Athens — even before the war — was faced with a tragic dilemma, one that might have puz-

<sup>1</sup> I owe to Principal Fyfe of Queen's University the suggestion that Thucydides was himself well aware of this, that his report of the funeral oration was the dramatic prelude to the Melian dialogue (Bk. v, 84)

zled the wisest of philosophers. There are times when even a justifiable boast is as bad as surrender, when the most earnest conservative is a destroyer of what he loves, when the finished technique that all artists strive for becomes its own enemy. To the historian, perfection is indeed always a danger signal. For complete success in any field — even more, the conviction of complete success — tends to hypnotize, to make even active and gifted minds rest in contemplation, indignantly sensitive to the blasphemy of criticism. To the proud and pleased Athenians the speech of Pericles would seem a plain statement of fact. Those who applauded it would hear the apology of Socrates with rage and utter lack of comprehension. But to say that they were wrong is not to say that Socrates was right. Bernard Shaw has said of Ibsen that he hated to see people comfortable when they ought to be uncomfortable. It was so with Socrates, and to him the discomfort was the necessary condition of a new birth. It may never have occurred to him that he was assisting in a death from which there could be no resurrection and that his gospel — even to those who heeded it — might add to the malady of ignorance the worse malady of argumentative rationalism.

So it may be that the accusers of Socrates missed the point a little when they condemned his agnosticism and his destructive method. We might perhaps blame rather — if we blame at all — his over-confident faith in the redeeming power of intelligence. Merciless critic as he was, he undermined less and the Sicilian expedition. The downfall of Athens' pride was thus foreshadowed first in the speech of Pericles and then more grimly in the speeches of the Athenian delegates, Thucydides having seen the end of the tragedy before he wrote the history. See F. M. Cornford, *Thucydides Myth-historicus* for the dramatic interpretation of Thucydides, especially Chapter x, on the Melian dialogue.

by criticism than by attempting to rebuild on the lines begun long before by Thales and Xenophanes and applied now to thought and conduct. His radicalism was a kind of Hellenic fundamentalism, and lay in a persistent appeal to the reason that he believed would destroy only the stupid and bad, clearing the way to 'a city that hath foundations.'

The appeal to reason is one that surely no intelligent mind can disapprove. But the trial of Socrates is still going on, and is the trial of many another martyr in the perpetually recurring tragedy of rightness that is wrong. Lucidity in thinking, like perfection in art, power in preaching, effectiveness in action, is often attained by a concentration and isolation that achieve the brilliancy of a spot-light, all unwanted details left in darkness, the terrible complexity of life reduced to a pleasant — even useful — simplicity. So reason may unhappily be as mistaken as fancy and more paralyzing. An argument, a precept, a form may be so convincing that the mind ceases to function, and expansion or modification becomes impossible without some shattering new stimulus. It is the defect of any purely rational or purely æsthetic way of reaching conclusions about a world that is neither rational nor æsthetic. The Socratic dialectic, unfertilized by the facts that some have called the 'dry bones' of knowledge, was as ominous as it was impressive. Frozen into speculative logic, modified and organized by the schools, it was to dominate and sterilize European philosophy for two thousand years.

So there we are. When Aristophanes bracketed Socrates with the Sophists, he was right as well as wrong. So were the Athenians when they condemned him for bringing new gods into the city. Before his time the Greeks were primarily

artists, even in their philosophy. After his time, while they could not wholly cease to be artists, the test of truth and the criterion of value were less and less artistic, more and more rational. Subtlety of mind and skill in logic overshadowed adventurous vision, creative form, imaginative search for harmony. There still remained Plato. But after Plato art was to succumb; intelligence was to conquer Hellenism; and the schools of Athens and of Alexandria were to see the triumph of the Socratic dialectic, the fading of the Socratic faith.

Yet the fact remains that his ultimate justification and victory is as unquestionable as his failure. Even if his method were seen to be futile and every doctrine he taught mistaken, Socrates would still be immortal. Not only because he lived and died for something greater than any doctrine, the necessity of intelligent virtue, but because he presents one of the rarest and most attractive combinations that history has recorded — an inflexible sense of duty with an amiable curiosity and open-mindedness, an unconquerable friendliness, an utterly disarming carelessness about what people thought of him and about all things that were of no real concern. No Greek is so well known to us, and no Greek is so captivating. The dialogues in which his great pupil made him the central figure will be read as long as men read at all, and he will be loved — and laughed at — forever. Even as to the mission in which he believed he was serving God, his effort to make his fellow-countrymen love truth, it is hard to imagine the ghost of the great teacher surveying the outcome with any loss of confidence. Time was on his side, and truth would prevail. Even if it turned out that his road of dialectic ended — temporarily — in a marsh.

## CHAPTER X

### *The Self-Destruction of the City-States*

WE MUST turn back now to the field of politics, to the problems and outlook of the Greek cities after the triumph of Lysander at the Hellespont and the Spartan occupation of Athens. A believer in the possibility of a united Greek people would have been sure of at least one thing after Ægospotami. Athens had failed, and quite largely by her own fault. Her magnificent genius does not conceal even from us her arrogance, her inability to see things political in any but an Athenian way, her often unscrupulous disregard of the rights of others. But the main cause of her failure was by no means distinctly Athenian. It had become quite clear during the fifth century that the greatest obstacle to Hellenic unity lay in a deep-rooted element in the Hellenic character, an element that was perhaps less evident in the Athenians than in their allies and their enemies, but was in greater or less measure common to all — the inability to see beyond the city walls.

Indeed one might go farther than this. Intense as was city patriotism, within each city there was an equally intense individualism that was as bad in some aspects as it was indispensable in others. Treachery was one of the commonest phenomena in Greek history, sometimes springing from personal ambition, greed, or resentment, sometimes from party spirit. One often feels that to the average Greek he himself came first, his party second, his city third, and after his city — nothing. Loyalty to Hellas was aroused only when danger

threatened the freedom he so greatly prized, and not always then. Again and again a Greek betrayed his party and his city alike for the sake of selfish advantage, his city for the sake of his party, Hellas for the sake of self, party, or city. His reason recognized the need of combining with others, and he could even feel an intense enthusiasm for the social group to which he belonged; but there was apt to be a wary eye open for personal profit, and the enthusiasm was seldom for Hellas. We say seldom rather than never. It was doubtless felt by many at such supreme moments as the day of Salamis, by a few at all times. But it is safe to say that at the end of the fifth century there was no such thing as even the beginning of a living Hellenic patriotism.

Yet this is far from saying that the Greeks were by nature incapable of such enthusiasm. Lessing — less than a century and a half ago — could say: ‘Of love of country I have no conception. To me it seems at best but an heroic weakness which I am right glad to be without’; and Germans fought other Germans under the leadership of Napoleon as under the eagles of Rome fifteen centuries before. Italy at the beginning of the nineteenth century was, as Metternich said, a mere ‘geographical expression,’ with a common language indeed, but with fewer bonds of unity than even the Greeks, for the Italians had no Olympic festivals at which Argive, Athenian, Spartan, and Corinthian could meet on common ground as Hellenes. Yet the century between Napoleon and the Great War saw Germany and Italy welded into nations of such passionate intensity in their patriotism that Bavarians, Saxons, and Prussians, Florentines, Lombards, and Piedmontese gave their lives by millions for the glory of a fatherland of which their grandfathers hardly dreamed. The

divisions of fifth-century Greece did not therefore wholly forbid the possibility of a united Greek state.

But the difficulties were very great, nevertheless. The cities had been fighting one another with ruthless bitterness beyond the memory of man. Worse still, they had again and again sided with Persians against Hellenes when their city or personal interests seemed to require it. Fifty thousand Greeks were said to have fought under the standard of Mardonius at Platæa. One party in Athens stood ready to betray the city to the Persians at the time of Marathon. The ruse of Themistocles, when by pretended treachery he induced the invaders to attack Salamis, succeeded so well simply because Xerxes was perfectly aware that there was nothing strange in the idea of even so notable a leader betraying his people. The exiled Alcibiades went to Sparta and gave counsel whereby his own city could be defeated, to be welcomed back by Athens a little later with but little sign of resentment. The Spartan Demaratus was one of the advisers of Xerxes during the great invasion. In the last campaigns of the Peloponnesian War both sides bid eagerly for Persian support, and Persian gold aided materially in securing Sparta's victory.

So feeble, then, were the bonds between the peoples of Hellas, in spite of the ties of language, religion, traditions, and interests. Yet if they remained divided their ultimate ruin was certain. It remained to be seen after the downfall of the short-lived Athenian Empire whether Sparta and her allies would meet and solve the problem. One point to Sparta's credit was scored at the outset. Some of the more bitter of the enemies of Athens demanded her utter destruction. To this Sparta refused her assent. Athens had in the

past given priceless services to Hellas, and for the memory of these her great rival refused to permit her to be blotted out. She was forced, indeed, to give up her empire. Her navy was reduced to twelve ships. Her independence was restricted by an engagement to recognize Sparta as her superior and overlord. But she was allowed to live.

Sparta was, however, incapable of either long-continued magnanimity or constructive statesmanship. In Athens, as in all the subject cities, a Spartan garrison enabled an oligarchy to overthrow and supplant democracy. But when the Athenian exiles driven from home by the oligarchs returned in force and re-established the democracy, Sparta, uncertain as to what was best to do and perhaps willing to avoid a renewal of the war, adopted a conciliatory policy and allowed her old enemy to have her own way. Other cities were less fortunate. In each of them an oligarchy of ten (*decarchy*) was established, supported by a Spartan 'regulator' (*harmost*) and a Spartan garrison. Even her own allies were made to feel that Sparta was their master. Her policy of arbitrary and brutal interference in local affairs, openly relying on her unquestioned military pre-eminence, aroused more resentment than the Athenian supremacy ever had because it was in no way constructive. The power of Athens had been at least based on a confederacy having a high purpose — the defense of Hellas against Persia. Sparta bought Persian support by giving back the Asiatic Greeks to the 'Great King,' and her supremacy was practically nothing more nor less than a military tyranny.

Two attempts were made indeed — both of them casual and ill-planned — to strike a blow at Persia. Seven hundred Spartans were allowed to accompany a body of some fourteen

thousand Greeks from various states who volunteered to serve an ambitious Persian prince, Cyrus, against an enemy. It soon turned out that the 'enemy' was his brother, the king. On the promise of high pay the expeditionary force accompanied the army of Cyrus almost to the walls of Babylon. But its triumphant march and the victory at Cunaxa were rendered void by the death in battle of Cyrus himself.

The Greek generals were enticed into a trap and killed. And the march back of the little Greek army, now reduced to about ten thousand men, under leaders elected by themselves, through a thousand miles of hostile territory, ended an episode whose only value lay in its illustration of Greek self-reliance and hardihood when really put to the test. Yet in view of the past and future of the relations between the two peoples the march back of the ten thousand was perhaps not without significance. Blind as the Greeks still were to their fatal weakness of disunion, their eyes were opened to Persian weakness. The incident was, in the words of Professor Bury, 'an epilogue to the invasion of Xerxes and a prologue to the conquests of Alexander.'

An immediate effect was seen when the Asiatic Greeks, who had taken advantage of the rebellion of Cyrus to declare their independence, appealed to Sparta for help. She granted the appeal. An army was sent to Asia, and soon there came to command it one of her kings, Agesilaos, whose virtues have been immortalized, strange to say, by an Athenian biographer, the historian Xenophon. Agesilaos, dreaming no doubt of a conquest such as Alexander was to achieve two generations later, led his army to victory after victory. But whatever his military ability or his personal virtues, his simple mind, unused to the intrigues and intricacies of

Oriental diplomacy, was tangled and puzzled by enemies whom he could easily defeat in the field. His victories were fruitless. And the Persians soon brought about the failure of the whole expedition, first by appointing Conon, the Athenian admiral who had been defeated at *Aegospotami*, to the command of the Persian fleet, and secondly by arousing the Greek cities of the mainland, not only Athens but Sparta's old allies Corinth and Thebes, to declare war against Sparta. Conon's complete victory over the Spartan fleet at Cnidos (394 b.c.) destroyed the maritime power of Sparta, and the war at home recalled Agesilaos to Greece, leaving the Asiatic Greeks once more under the rule of Persia.

Nothing could have been more ominous. It is impossible, as one surveys the course of the war that followed — the Corinthian War, as it is called — to feel any enthusiasm for either side. Like the Peloponnesian War it is simply undiluted tragedy, another step in the self-destruction of the Greek cities. Sparta had indeed amply earned the defeats that soon left her shorn of all her power outside the Peloponnesos and much of her prestige as a military state. And the affection that we are bound to feel for the city of *Aeschylus* and Socrates causes, no doubt, a certain glow of satisfaction as we see her rise again to something like her old glory, rebuilding the long walls and regaining her ancient supremacy at sea. But behind the triumphs and defeats of Athens and Corinth, Sparta and Thebes, one sees the sardonic smile of the diplomats overseas. Whether Persian pride made it possible for the Great King and his satraps to realize that united Greece meant the overthrow of Persia may be doubted, but there must have been at least an uneasy half conviction of danger — at any rate, a very sure feeling that a divided

and fighting Greece was a satisfying and comforting spectacle.

The Corinthian War ended exactly as one might expect. Persian intrigue had begun it; Persian intrigue closed it; and Persian intrigue would have been powerless to do either without the aid of Greek jealousy, Greek rancor, Greek instability. Persia had desired the humiliation of Sparta. She by no means desired the rise of Athens to her old estate, much less the further cementing of the powerful confederacy of Athens, Corinth, and Thebes with the many smaller cities that contributed ships and money to the allied cause. So when Sparta began to send envoys requesting the mediation of Persia, the time came when the king was willing to listen. The peace of Antalkidas (387 B.C.) was practically dictated by Persia to cities that had rendered themselves powerless to defy her. It definitely settled the question of Persian rule over the Asiatic Greeks, and it asserted the principle of city independence throughout Hellas, i.e., it broke up all alliances and confederacies.<sup>1</sup> Since Sparta was still easily the strongest single city, the Peace of Antalkidas made her once more the dominant power of Greece. But it was a dominance made possible by Persia.

Such an arrangement could have lasted only if Sparta had used her power with tact and forbearance. But tact and forbearance were the last things to be expected of her.

<sup>1</sup> 'King Artaxerxes deems it just that the cities in Asia, with the islands of Clazomenæ and Cyprus, should belong to himself; and the rest of the Hellenic cities, both small and great, he will leave independent, with the exception of Lemnos, Imbros, and Scyros, which three are to belong to Athens as of yore. Should any of the parties concerned not accept this peace, I, Artaxerxes, together with those who share my views, will war against the offenders by land and sea.' (*Xenophon, Hellenica, v, 1.*)

The two cases in which her acts of tyranny were most obviously serious blunders were the destruction of the Chalcidic League — a group of Greek cities on the Thracian coast whose rising power awakened the jealousy of Sparta — and the occupation of the citadel of Thebes, the Cadmeia. The Chalcidic League might well have checked the menace of Macedon a generation later and averted the loss of Greek independence. The violation of the Peace of Antalkidas by the seizure of the Cadmeia turned Theban hostility into a deadly hatred that was soon to overthrow the Spartan supremacy forever.

Among the Thebans exiled by the oligarchy was a daring and enterprising soldier named Pelopidas. With other exiles he took refuge in Athens, but he had no intention of remaining there. Carefully choosing his time and laying his plans he returned to Thebes in disguise with twelve companions, obtained access to the oligarchs at a banquet, killed them, and proclaimed the freedom of the city. The citizens rallied to the liberators *en masse*. The Spartan garrison was allowed to depart, and it remained to be seen whether Thebes could make good her defiance of Sparta. For a time Athens was her ally, but Athens' heart was not in the war, and when she made her peace with Sparta, Thebes was left to fight her battle practically alone.

Thebes, while by far the strongest city of Boeotia, had never had at all the pre-eminence in Hellas of Athens and Sparta. She was probably the third city of Greece in military strength, and during the Peloponnesian War she had been a valuable ally of Sparta, a bitter enemy of Athens. Yet her reputation had never quite recovered from her alliance with Xerxes, nor had she ever shown any real statesmanship, any

constructive genius, any truly Hellenic feeling or Hellenic idealism. In literature and the arts she ranked far down in the list of Greek cities, though she could boast two names revered by every Hellene, Hesiod and Pindar. Politically an oligarchy of rich landlords, holding work in such contempt that no one could be elected to a magistracy who had within twelve years engaged in trade, intellectually barren, unproductive in art, contributing to the rich store of Greek mythology its most terrible and repulsive legends, never loved, never trusted, never honored, Thebes was the one Greek city of any size to which posterity owes least. Yet under capable leaders she had always been formidable in war. It was on the field of battle that she was now to make her one bid for immortality, and that she succeeded was due to the man she chose to be her leader, Epaminondas, the friend of Pelopidas.

The name of Epaminondas is sadly conspicuous in the long list of Greek soldiers and statesmen by virtue of its freedom from blot. Citizen of Thebes though he was, he had the virtues that we least associate with his city. No stain of greed, of cruelty, of pride, of treachery seems ever to have touched him. He was a philosopher and a teacher, and his very gentleness made the oligarchs who exiled Pelopidas permit Epaminondas to remain. He had no hand in the killing of the oligarchs and the overthrow of their power. But when Thebes refused to concede the terms of peace demanded by Sparta and the Spartan king Cleombrotus invaded Boeotia, it was Epaminondas, student of war as well as of philosophy, who led the Theban defense.

The Spartan army of invasion greatly outnumbered the Thebans and their Boeotian auxiliaries. In reputation there was so little comparison that a Theban soldier might well

have considered his army defeated before the battle was begun. Yet when the two forces met at Leuktra (371 B.C.), a little town southwest of Thebes, the Thebans pierced the hitherto invincible Spartan line, won a decisive victory, and practically ended the Spartan supremacy at a blow. Epaminondas had devised a new battle formation. To meet a superior force of warriors individually equal to his own in the usual battle array would have been to invite certain defeat. He resolved, therefore, to concentrate his strength on one point, and when that one point was overwhelmed to attack the more or less disorganized enemy along the whole line. His left wing, composed of picked men, was made a solid mass fifty files deep. As it advanced, the center kept a little in the rear and the right still farther in the rear, the whole making a wedge of immense piercing strength. The plan was a complete success. The Spartan line, twelve deep, was broken and the battle won almost before the Theban center and right had entered the fight at all.

The blow was a heavy one, and Sparta seemed unable to recover from it. Too proud to ask for peace, she saw the Peloponnesos invaded, the Arcadian cities of the interior encouraged to form a powerful league, and worse still, Messenia — a land that had been subject to absolute Spartan control for centuries — made free and independent. Sparta had lost the headship of even her own peninsula. Thebes, though neither Sparta nor Athens ever acknowledged it, had become the first state of Greece. But it was a supremacy that depended on the life of one man, and even the genius of Epaminondas could not make it really effective. Year after year saw weary and futile war. Athens, still hoping to regain her old empire and no longer afraid of Sparta, became

the ally of her old enemy against Thebes. The other cities became allies of Thebes or of Athens or of Sparta according to the measure and the direction of their fear, their jealousy, or their hope of profit. Leagues were formed only to be split asunder by internal dissensions. Greece was nearing the abyss.

The life of Epaminondas, we have said, was a necessity to the Theban supremacy. In the state of affairs that existed throughout the Greek world it is hard to see that any one man's life greatly mattered for the permanent good of Greece. There are some wounds, some diseases, before which the ablest physicians stand helpless. The continuance of the Spartan supremacy, had Sparta been able to retain her old energy, might have brought peace and unity either through Spartan rule or through the rise against her of confederacies which would have been in themselves a training in co-operation. But the Peace of Antalkidas — the King's Peace as it was called — and the overthrow of Sparta had left Hellas a turmoil of warring cities, no one city powerful enough to create order, all alike too blinded and fevered to raise a finger for sanity and peace. In due time Epaminondas fell at the head of his victorious Thebans in his fourth invasion of the Peloponnesos, at the battle of Mantinea, 362 b.c. But the fact is interesting only because of his personality. The power of Thebes ended with her great soldier's death. But the wars of Greek against Greek neither slackened nor increased.

Far in the north, beyond the Cambunian Mountains, was the kingdom of Macedon. The Greek who might journey north from Athens, through Boeotia and Phocis, through the narrow gates of Thermopylæ and across the plain of Thessaly,

would feel as he neared the Vale of Tempe and saw the massive heights of Ossa and Pelion that he was approaching the boundaries of Hellas. Northward lay the lands of barbarians — Macedonians and Illyrians. Yet if the Macedonians were hardly Hellenes neither were they quite barbarians. The true Macedonians were probably of mixed Greek and Thracian blood. Indeed this was so generally admitted that Macedonian princes had been allowed to compete in the Olympic festival.

Thucydides, writing some fifty years before Macedon began to be a menace to Greece, thus briefly described the northern kingdom. ‘There is an upper Macedon, which is inhabited by Lyncestians and other tribes; these are the allies and tributaries of the lower Macedonians, but have kings of their own. The maritime country which we now call Macedon was conquered and formed into a kingdom by Alexander, the father of Perdiccas, and his ancestors the Temenidæ, who originally came from Argos.’ If we figure a Lowland king at Edinburgh of Danish or English stock holding the Gaelic tribes of the Highlands in precarious subjection, we shall have a fair notion of the position and problem of the Greek or semi-Greek kings of Macedon at their capital of Aigai or Pella in relation to the Illyrian and Pæonian tribes of the hill country to the north and west. The Macedonians and their kings were normally stronger, but not much stronger, than their less civilized vassals, and their supremacy was constantly shaken by risings of the clans.

In the earlier part of the fourth century none of the warring cities of Greece had any serious interest in Macedon. Athens quite frequently used the kingdom as an ally in her efforts to control the Greek colonies of the three-pronged

Chalcidic peninsula, more especially Amphipolis or Olynthos. It never occurred to either Athens or Sparta when they fought these Chalcidic colonies that their real enemy was at Aigai and Pella, and that they were weakening cities that might become priceless allies. Nor did they realize the situation even when at last Philip II, a statesman and military leader of the very first rank, became regent of Macedon in the year 359 b.c. For his first problem was not the conquest of Greece, but the complete reduction of the mountain clans, and it was an easy matter to avoid the awakening of any jealous fear in the still formidable cities to the south.

It had so happened that when Philip was a boy of fourteen and his country in the throes of civil war, a Theban army under Pelopidas entered Macedon in the interests of one of the contending parties. When the Thebans withdrew they took with them certain hostages, among them the young prince. For three years Philip remained at Thebes, studying the art of war and government under the most brilliant general that Greece had ever produced. When he became regent he had the opportunity to put his lessons into practice. The Theban power had been based on an effective citizen army and on the masterly tactics of Epaminondas. Philip set himself to construct an even more powerful army, to equip and train a large body of cavalry on which he counted for enveloping and breaking his opponent's wings, and to perfect the phalanx — not the wedge of Epaminondas, but the usual solid line of heavy-armed troops, drilled to maneuver in open order and carrying a spear much longer than had been customary. With infinite patience he created his army and accustomed it to his tactics. One by one he crushed his unruly feudatories, and when he took the crown

in 356 b.c. — the birth year of his son Alexander — he was already well on his way to being master of a united kingdom and an invincible army. The clansmen found that by serving under their conqueror they could have their fill of fighting and at the same time feel the pride of membership in what was fast becoming the finest army in the world. The Highland regiments in the army of Wolfe before Quebec might be considered a not entirely inapt parallel to the Illyrian and Lyncestian regiments in the army of Philip.

Bit by bit the way was prepared for the conquest of Greece. Master of the art of war as he was, Philip was too cautious to rely absolutely on his army. His policy throughout his reign of twenty years was the best illustration of the sinister motto '*Divide et impera*' — *conquer by dividing* — that history has recorded. We are concerned in this book with the rise, the flowering, the fruition, and — alas — the decline of a people's genius, not with the statecraft of princes. It is not necessary to tell in its melancholy detail how Philip conciliated the Olynthiac League by giving to them divers cities which were in his power but for which he had no immediate use; how he pleased Athens by acknowledging her right to Amphipolis; how he encouraged the Athenians to fight their (and his) enemies in Chalcidice and Thrace — preparing his way while he was busy elsewhere — and soothed their fears when he finally decided to crush Olynthos; how he looked on gladly and made good use of his time while Mausolus of Caria stirred up Rhodes, Cos, and Chios to war against their Athenian overlords and while Thebes fought the Phocians; how he intervened at a well-judged moment to help some of the Thessalian barons to crush others, leaving him master of all; how he intervened even more skillfully

to punish the Phocians when their sacrilegious hands had seized the treasury at Delphi; how by craft he obtained possession of the vital pass of Thermopylæ; and how at last when it was too late Athens and Thebes combined in a desperate effort to avert the inevitable and were utterly defeated in the decisive battle of Chæronea (338 b.c.).

Anyone who wishes to see the whole drama from the point of view of a man who believed with all his heart and soul in Athens, in Hellas, and in the doomed liberties of the city-states, may turn to the speeches of Demosthenes. The greatest of Greek orators was the most powerful and constant of Philip's enemies. All that one man — and that man no soldier — could do to make Athens pursue a consistent anti-Macedonian policy was done by Demosthenes. But his warnings fell on dull ears. Athens had wasted her strength and her wealth in fighting vain battles against a score of Greek states from Amphipolis to Byzantium and from Byzantium to Rhodes. When the supreme crisis came, she was shorn of all but a tithe of her ancient strength. And when Demosthenes sought to create a pan-Hellenic alliance against Philip, he met the same jealousies, the same treachery, the same wish to be on the winning side, the same eye to the main chance, and the same cheerful willingness to be bribed that had been the curse of Hellas for generations. His was a noble dream. But he was fighting for a cause that had been lost before he was born. The city-states had destroyed themselves, and the king of Macedon simply stepped in to strike the final blow and take the prize of victory.

Yet few have condemned Demosthenes for his championship of a lost cause, or Athens for her belated awakening and final unavailing struggle, a struggle that was repeated until

it ended at last in the complete extinction of her liberties at the hands of Antipater in 322 B.C. Eight years after Chæronea, Demosthenes, in a speech of noble pathos,<sup>1</sup> defended his own stand and that of his city. His words may remain a sufficient vindication of the free and independent Athens that was passing away, the Athens whose weaknesses we may sorrowfully remember for their warning, and whose greatness we may never cease to honor.

I affirm that if the future had been apparent to us all... nevertheless, the State ought not to have deviated from her course, if she had regard to her own honor, the traditions of the past, or the judgment of posterity. As it is, she is looked upon as having failed in her policy — the common lot of all mankind when such is the will of heaven; but if, claiming to be the foremost state of Greece, she had deserted her post, she would have incurred the reproach of betraying Greece to Philip. If we had abandoned without a struggle all which our fathers braved every danger to win, who would not have spurned us?... How could we have looked in the face the strangers who flock to our city, if things had reached their present pass — Philip the chosen leader and lord of all — while others without our assistance had borne the struggle to avert this consummation? We! who have never in times past preferred inglorious safety to peril in the path of honor! Is there a Greek or a barbarian who does not know that Thebes at the height of her power, and Sparta before her — aye, and even the king of Persia himself — would have been only too glad to compromise with us, and that we might have had what we chose, and possessed our own in

<sup>1</sup> *On the Crown*, usually regarded as the greatest of the orations of Demosthenes. It is worth careful reading throughout in this connection, for it is a review and defense of his whole political life, and a valuable, though of course one-sided, statement of the policy and achievements of Philip.

peace, had we been willing to obey orders and to suffer another to put himself at the head of Greece? But it was not possible — it was not a thing which the Athenians of those days could do. It was against their nature, their genius, their traditions, and no human persuasions could induce them to side with a wrong-doer because he was powerful, and to embrace subjection because it was safe....

If by your vote you condemn my policy you will pronounce yourselves to have been in the wrong, instead of having suffered what has befallen you through the cruel injustice of fortune. But it cannot be; you have not been in the wrong, men of Athens, in doing battle for the freedom and salvation of all; I swear by your forefathers, who bore the battle's brunt at Marathon; by those who stood in arms at Plataea; by those who fought the sea-fight at Salamis; by the heroes of Artemisium, and by many more whose resting-place in our national monuments attests that, as our country buried, so she honored, all alike — victors and vanquished. She was right; for what brave men could do, all did, though a higher power was master of their fate.'

So Athens spoke her last valiant word, heedless of the roar of battle far away in Asia, where Greek soldiers were shaking to pieces the kingdom of Persia, watering their horses in the Jordan, the Nile, or the Euphrates, and girding themselves for the mighty rush that was to carry the Greek tongue to the passes of the Himalayas and the plains of northern India.

## CHAPTER XI

*Plato*

### I

THE city-states had demonstrated the terrible paradox that self-determination, carried to its logical end, means self-destruction. The passion for freedom had made freedom impossible. So in telling the story of the Greeks from the Peloponnesian War to the battle of Chæronea, it has seemed unavoidable to present it as the story of a down curve. Yet the reducing of history to a simple diagram, however pleasing for the moment, is embarrassing unless, like Rousseau, we 'begin by setting aside the facts.' Something tragic and ruinous undoubtedly was happening to the Greek people in the fourth century. A real decline and fall did take place. But it was not a decline and fall in intelligence; it was not uniform; outside of politics it was perceptible only on a scale of centuries; and some aspects of the story show, not growing weakness, but magnificent vitality. All of which is distressing to the systematic mind, but is entirely human and not in the least unique. Degeneration and regeneration are oddly interwoven in complex patterns; the down curves of history are often accompanied by, even caused by, up curves; and this was certainly true of the Greek genius after the age of Pericles, even after the age of Alexander. It was still to enter on new phases and to play a great part in the history of the next six hundred years.

Nevertheless, something died. The Greeks did at last lose their distinctive vision and power, and if their soul was im-

mortal it was to find rebirth in new forms that Sophocles would not have recognized. It would be rash to say that such a catastrophe took place in the fourth century and can be assigned a date. But it does seem true that, if the possibilities of decay were present in the Athens of Themistocles and of Pericles, they became more evident as time went on and swifter in their working out. The age of Praxiteles and Plato and Aristotle was hardly an age of collapse, heavy with cloud as the future might be. But it was an age of disillusionment, of conscious interpretation, of criticism, and criticism is rarely of any use to those criticized. The Jeremiah or the Aristotle who is most priceless to future generations is most helpless to avert calamity from his own. Indeed, when the symptoms of spiritual disease can be described and classified — whether with reproach or with approval, whether idealized or condemned — the very accuracy of the diagnosis may hasten the end too clearly seen. Prophets and philosophers are in their way portents of disaster.

So it is as we near the close of our story, that we come to two of the greatest names in the Greek record, Plato and Aristotle. To think of them as devising subtle and ingenious systems of metaphysics, however brilliant, is to misunderstand them. They were men looking at a real world of which they were part, considering what it was all about, wherein it was failing and how it could arrive at peace. Unlike as they were in many respects, both were interested in much the same things; both were interpreters and critics of the four great ways in which the Greek genius had found expression. And in their effort to interpret these, they were together the founders of western philosophy — touching science in its search for causes, religion in its concentration on ultimate

values, concerned always with the human problem, man's place in the difficult and confusing world that he lives in.

It is rash, of course, to speak of the 'four' ways in which the Greek genius had found expression, but it has its convenience too. Thus, when we call Thales the Milesian and his successors the first European scientists, we have in mind a series of thinkers who each in his own way saw the world as a question and tried to answer it. Their speculations, born of curiosity, began the long and exciting history of rationalism. Now beside the inquiries of the scientists we may place the achievements of poets, painters, architects, and sculptors who saw things not as questions but as parts of possible pictures, possible harmonies, details to be put together, tangles to be untangled, disorder to be reduced to order, noise to be resolved into music, the formless and meaningless to be given purposeful and meaningful form. Almost or quite indistinguishable from this was the effort to create an adequate political order — an effort that failed, but that was urged by an emotional intensity and an anxious wisdom that made even the failure a permanent heritage of western civilization. Then there is the feeling for the wonder of the world that we associate with Orphism, Dionysus, the Pythagoreans, that breathed passion into the poetry of Pindar and *Æschylus* and gave life to the forms of Greek art. The second of these, the sense for form, is no doubt the dominant one, what we have most in mind when we use the word Hellenic, but they all moved Socrates when he began to make them specific by critical analysis in order to find how they might contribute to good and effective living. And this dangerous but useful task of examining and integrating the rational, the æsthetic, and the mystical approaches to the puzzle of man and his

world was taken up by Plato — the heir of Thales and Heraclitus, of Æschylus and Phidias, of Pythagoras and Socrates.

## II

Plato was born in Athens in the year 427 B.C. — about the time of the death of Pericles and the completing of the Parthenon. He grew to manhood during the terrible years of the Peloponnesian War, and he lived for another half-century during the confusion and anxiety of a painful transition, through the collapse of the old political and religious order. He was still a young man when Ægospotami ended the Athenian Empire, not yet thirty when the Athenian democracy killed Socrates; he saw the Peace of Antalkidas, the humiliation of Sparta at the hands of Epaminondas, the brief glory and quick failure of Thebes; in his later years the black cloud of Macedon was gathering in the north, and he died at the age of eighty — nine years before Chæronea. All these things, the barren victories of Lysander and Conon and Agesilaos, the intrigues of politicians, the passions and jealousies of the cities, must have been matters of intense and anxious moment to him as to every thoughtful Greek of his time. He was living in stormy times, with small likelihood of peace ahead, and the phrase so familiar to us — ‘to make the world safe for democracy’ — would have seemed to him grotesque and bitter irony.

Yet through these restless and calamitous years he had something of the same mental detachment as we see, for instance, in Thucydides, and it is possible too that such detachment was less difficult to a lofty and powerful mind in the fourth century than it might have been in the age of Pericles. City patriotism was slowly burning itself out. The famous

Johnsonian dictum that patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel expresses very well the reaction of a certain type of mind to the love of country that has degenerated into ignoble partisanship or declamatory fireworks. It was increasingly possible to look at political phenomena and at social and moral problems objectively, to estimate them with a certain dispassionate and disillusioned aloofness.<sup>1</sup> In fourth-century Greece there was no great sweep of noble but perhaps blinding religious or patriotic emotion to confuse one's perspective. Rationalism, individualism, impatient radicalism, liberated and running loose, were taking the place of social enthusiasms and social virtues as the old forms in morals and politics lost their vitality.

Many minds, when their old supports crumble, relapse into recklessness. But some find in the decay of outworn forms a stimulus to the discovery of better ones, and to the student of history the spectacle of a thousand vessels that have lost their anchorage running on the rocks is less instructive than the sight of one steering for the open sea. In Plato's heart Athens was giving place to the City of God.<sup>2</sup> For he saw clearly the fatal trend of his city's politics, the disintegration of not only moral standards but of the character foundation — so hard to define, but expressed to some extent by our word *morale* — that makes possible any moral standards at all. It was indeed beyond his power to suggest an immediately workable remedy for the madness and futility all around him. But he could survey the chaos and try to find a possible line of intellectual, moral, and social reconstruction that might clarify

<sup>1</sup> *Republic*, 496E, but see whole passage, 492–496 (Book vi).

<sup>2</sup> 'The poet has said, "Dear City of Cecrops!" and shall not I say, "Dear City of God"!'" (Marcus Aurelius, IV, 23).

and reconcile the confused wishes of thoughtful minds. To those who found the 'practical facts' of their age in debates, elections, platforms, diplomatic intrigues, and policies he might seem academic; and yet to this he, like all of his type then and since, might answer that he was no more academic than the physician who attacks, not the external symptoms of a disease, but the hidden and deep-seated malady, and who sees the only cure in the righting of a vital function that has gone wrong.

Hellas was afflicted with a deadly ailment that was — to Plato — wholly spiritual, *preoccupation with the wrong things*. It could be healed only by 'turning the eye of the soul to the light.' And if it could not be healed, then at least there might be some few who would avoid the abyss and carry on a saving message to a less foolish and storm-driven generation. Which was, of course, what happened. Platonism, like Christianity, has had a curious history and has passed through many phases that might have repelled Plato himself, but it never died and never entirely lost its redeeming power.<sup>1</sup> For the disease he saw was not peculiar to his time and race, but is always present and is most virulent in an age of acute intelligence, tense nerves, and shaken standards.

How then can one learn to 'turn the eye from the perishing

<sup>1</sup> See Adam, *The Vitality of Platonism*, and the first chapters of Taylor, *Platonism*, and Burnet, *Platonism*, two of the smallest and most illuminating of the multitude of books on Plato and his message. Those who wish to go more deeply into the matter will find guidance in Professor Paul Shorey's *Unity of Plato's Thought*, and *What Plato Said*. The best complete translation of Plato's dialogues is that of Jowett in five volumes (Clarendon Press). Eight of them are contained in three volumes of Macmillan's Golden Treasury Series. One of these is the *Republic*, which is also published separately in convenient form by the Clarendon Press.

world to what is real and eternal'? How did Plato go about his search for 'reality,' and had he any clear idea as to what he would find?

Plato's philosophy, so far as we have it, is contained in the dialogues, and is conveyed by the living, ever-flowing medium of conversation (dialectic).<sup>1</sup> The dialogue, like the drama, deliberately puts the writer and his views into the background, so that the tendency of the written word to harden thought into fixity and finality is neutralized. In nearly all of these ostensibly reported conversations, Plato's beloved teacher Socrates is represented as the leading figure. There is no attempt at formal unity or systematic treatment, and to a modern student, accustomed to textbooks and treatises, the dialogues, with all their richness of suggestion, their penetrating criticisms, their flashes of beauty and prophetic insight, are often bewildering and even exasperating. We expect from a serious book accurate information or well-reasoned conclusions or both. Plato gives us neither. Yet to a twentieth-century mind, weary of contradictory dogmatisms, his method is peculiarly invigorating in its plasticity, its refusal to rest content with any 'system.' One does not need to be a disciple to find perennial charm in the vivid human color of the dialogues, their good-natured

<sup>1</sup> Dialectic came to mean what we call metaphysics and then came to mean logic. Plato uses the word often as meaning philosophy. But it must be remembered that before Aristotle none of these words had any rigid, precise significance. Philosophy was literally the love of wisdom, not a closely reasoned structure of thought on which you wrote essays and passed examinations. Dialectic was conversation, discussion, argument, that should clear up misunderstanding, an oral examination in which examiner and students were indistinguishable, all co-operating in an inquiry. When it was organized and systematized into logic — as it was very soon, notably by Aristotle — it gained in precision, but lost in spontaneity and flexibility.

sword-play, their combination of earnestness with large and unconstrained open-mindedness, their transitions from subtle logic and flights of imagination to practical common-sense.

It was not in his method, however, that Plato most influenced both his own people and succeeding ages. It was smothered by the didactic, homiletic, expository, legal, and dogmatic habits of mind that were more congenial to the later Greeks, the Romans, and the Christian fathers. What did persist for ages was a certain intensity of conviction that burns through all the argumentative diversity of the dialogues, all their apparent casualness — the conviction that truth can be found, not by sight and touch, not by 'sense-experience,' but by a spiritual vision that sees through appearance to fact, through the insignificant to the significant, and that so far as it is found it liberates and transforms as nothing else can. Behind the dialectician was a poet and a preacher, behind the play of argument the certainty that the world of the senses is evanescent, inconsequent, unreal, concealing by its constant change a changeless and eternal reality of the spirit, to be apprehended only by the purified soul. To stress this overmuch turns Plato into a Platonist, which would be a pity. But the fact remains that it was Plato's mysticism, not his open mind and his large outlook and his moral earnestness, that was inseparably associated with his name for two thousand years.

Now Plato was undoubtedly something of a Platonist. But his Platonism was never quite that of his followers because his mysticism never wholly escaped from experience or wanted to. He was facing a tremendous problem for which there was no easy or external solution, living in an anxious and unstable world in which people had got all their

values twisted and out of perspective. Nothing would do any good except seeing the Truth — and the point of using the definite article and the capital T is his conviction that there is a fundamentally right way to regard the whole matter of living. Truth that will issue in fruitful knowledge, goodness, and hope is the aim of Plato's philosophy. He never found it possible to reduce that philosophic vision to precise statement, to define and describe and make a formula or a creed. And if he had, his definition of Truth — no matter how good — would have been less effective than his faith in its reality, its attainableness, and its value.

### III

Nevertheless, Plato's successors were bound to see whether they could not find in their master some kind of definite philosophic gospel. Happily or unhappily they found one, and it has been called the 'Theory of Ideas.' But that word 'theory' created a misunderstanding from the outset. Plato did set forth frequently what might be called doctrines, sometimes brilliantly illuminating, sometimes as fleeting and inconsequent as sparks from a torch. But to select any of these as a 'theory of ideas' is to ignore the fluidity of the dialogue method, in which a doctrine is not a final thing, but only a way of putting a possible solution of the problem into dogmatic form for convenience of inspection and criticism. The problem itself was as old as human thought — the reconciling of the jumble of contradictions and futilities that life seems to be with an ineradicable faith in order and purpose. Plato was, so to speak, experimenting all the time, often finding clues to what he was looking for, never reaching an absolute conclusion. And yet, having made this reserva-

tion, one may admit that the ‘theory of ideas’ is not wholly a myth. Back of all the experiments there is a constant faith in something ‘in whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning,’ and to express this he uses — in dialogue after dialogue of his early and middle life — the word that has given its name to the whole movement and attitude to life called Idealism.

The word ‘idea’ means in the English vernacular a notion, a thought, a mental picture, or something of the sort, but to a Greek it meant *form*. Now ‘form’ is a word that does not seem to belong to philosophic or scientific language at all. Its significance to us is æsthetic, implying arrangement, so that formless means confused, unarranged, and to give a thing form is to make it orderly and intelligible in a sort of pictorial way. Perhaps then the English word does have some of the Greek meaning. As we use it an ‘idea’ is at least an effort — however lazy, casual, uninformed — to put things together and make sense out of them. Similarly, anything that is *formed* — a table, a building, a mathematical proposition, a political constitution — is not just a sum of atom added to atom, figure to figure, law to law, but an æsthetic whole in which an integrating *idea* makes the parts into something different from any of them, something that fulfills a purpose, performs a function, resolves a problem. That is to say, form, in being æsthetic, is also dynamic and creative, devising a way out of confusion.

This may seem an unnecessarily fantastic inflation and distortion of the word ‘form.’<sup>1</sup> Perhaps it is, and perhaps it

<sup>1</sup> Plato really uses three words, *eidos*, *idea*, and *paradeigma*, usually translated by our words ‘form,’ ‘idea,’ and ‘pattern.’ In discussion and comment it is customary and no doubt convenient to use only *idea* — ignoring the difference between the Greek sense and the English. The

would be better to discard it and concentrate on such words as 'reason' or 'understanding' or 'intelligence.' Plato did not think so, however, much as he respected reason as the power by which we apprehend forms. Reason is, as we say, subjective. It is to the mind what the eye is to the body — an indispensable instrument for seeing, yet quite useless if it sees nothing and worse than useless if it sees what is not there or sees in wrong perspective and so leads to misguided behavior. The Idea is the thing *to be seen*, the only thing worth seeing, that which ties together and gives meaning to the 'appearances' (phenomena) that are the raw material of sense experience. The eye alone sees not a picture but colors, and the ear alone hears not harmony or melody but sounds. The senses cannot see the form that gives the impressions coherence any more than the clear eye of a savage can 'see' the engine of an ocean liner. He sees not an engine but a jumble of steel. The things that really count are the things we do not see with our eyes at all, the animating, creating, forming Ideas without which the visible world could not be known, could not even *be*.

Obviously, to the external *shape* meaning that the word 'form' ordinarily has, Plato adds an active meaning — somewhat as later philosophers did with the word 'nature' (*natura naturans, natura naturata* — nature as creative, forming, and nature as created, formed, each implying the other). But, at any rate, if there is any 'doctrine of ideas,' it is not so much a theory as a way of looking at life, a conviction as to what a searcher for real and fruitful wisdom ought to look for, and in French and Germans do the same thing, and it is, of course, misleading if we are not careful. Any one word would be misleading, though, if we insist on giving it an invariable, rigidly consistent meaning irrespective of the context.

that sense it is to be found everywhere in Plato. Different dialogues stress different aspects of it, different in angle and range and certainty, but always saying that the key to anything and everything is its Idea. Only as you find the ideas of things do you discover what is really there. They are hard to find, not because they are complicated, but because they are so confused by our ignorance, our bodily senses, our passions, even by our 'common-sense.' It is like looking for law in the jungle, like listening to music in a battle or a storm, like looking for a picture under an ash-heap.

But never was difficult search undertaken with such disarming leisureliness, such benignant persistence, such constant — even exasperating — good humor in the face of repeated failure. The earlier dialogues seem to begin anywhere and to end nowhere. Aristotle tells us that 'two things might rightly be attributed to Socrates: inductive reasoning and universal definitions.' It may be true of the Socrates that we do not know, but the curious thing is that Plato's Socrates is not particularly inductive and never does achieve a definition. In the *Charmides* temperance is discussed, but has to be left undefined, and it is so with friendship in the *Lysis* and courage in the *Laches*. Even in such a later dialogue as the *Republic*, if justice is defined (i.e., its *idea* comprehended and stated), the definition has no assurance of finality, and you feel that another and better one might be proposed tomorrow. Definitions are suggested only to be pulled to pieces, and in the end you are left still questioning. One might almost suspect that Plato is pointing to the conclusion that when you define a thing in the ordinary way you isolate it, take it out of its context, and thereby kill its meaning. So that while his Socrates does persistently ask

for a definition, he is doing it, not expecting to find one, but to get people out of a bad habit.

Yet taking a number of dialogues together one does seem to discover an illuminating principle emerging through the pleasant fog of 'trial-and-error' discussion. Just as it is impossible to define (i.e., give the boundaries of) France or Saxony except in terms of the map of Europe, so temperance, friendship, courage, and justice are not definable in themselves because they are not *things* in themselves, but are closely related aspects of something larger which might be called — say — Goodness or the Good. 'The Good' is itself nearly defined in the *Gorgias* and the sixth book of the *Republic*, but not precisely, not as you would define a circle or a triangle, for it is like defining the infinite, like describing God. Yet just as a finger or a rib has no meaning apart from a man, and a leaf has no meaning apart from a tree, so any one good thing — friendship or justice — is good relatively to the all-inclusive goodness that you have to assume before this or that kind of goodness can be called good at all. This seeing of things in their right relations is not the whole story, but it is an important part of the story, for it means the finding of a standard of judgment — in the long run an ultimate standard.

It would be easy to infer that Plato had in mind the mechanical, mathematical orderliness of later thought — trees and tables, beauty and courage, alike 'parts of one stupendous whole,' but for one passage that would justify such an inference there are fifty that make it more than doubtful. All one can say is that the form of anything is its essential reality and is yet intelligible only, first, in relation to more comprehensive forms, then in relation to the Form of Good, or, as

we might say, God. The search for truth is, in short, a question of relating every detail to that which alone will explain it, the whole of which it is a part, an aspect of Platonism — perhaps a doubtful aspect — that Tennyson expresses very aptly in six familiar lines:

‘Flower in the crannied wall,  
I pluck you out of the crannies.  
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,  
Little flower, but if I could understand  
What you are, root and all and all in all,  
I should know what God and man is.’

Whether this is precisely Plato or not, it comes close to what he was trying to clear up. But of course there is a difficulty. We can see the flower, but the farther we follow its relationships, the more helpless we are, our ordinary modes of reasoning lost in an infinite complexity. The trouble is that, when we leap from familiar things and familiar ways of thinking to unseen and intangible ‘forms,’ and then to a unifying ‘Form of Good,’ we are unsure of our footing and handicapped by the clumsy stiffness of the words we have to use. Turn this world of Ideas into a legal and dogmatic system like Calvin’s or a mechanical system like Newton’s, and the matter becomes simpler, but Plato could not do that. He was too much of an artist and a poet to be satisfied with an explanation that did not explain. He was indeed aware that his own explanation did not explain either, though he often came back to it. So comparison, hypothesis, trial flights of exploring imagination, myths, and parables were called in to help. In the later dialogues the search for absolute truth became more and more complex, and the word ‘form’ was

less and less used. Plato's conviction as to the spiritual basis of reality became ever clearer and more positive and yet harder to state in exact terms.

But if what we might regard as the Pythagorean strain in his work became increasingly evident, the Socratic was never lost. If he was a mystic and in his way — not an aimless way, though — a speculative dreamer, he was so not from indolence, but because he had to reach far beyond his knowledge to make what he did know mean anything. He was no more and no less a dreamer than Copernicus and Newton were and for the same reason — trying to make a picture into which his facts would fit. Not only fit, but come alive, have value for living. For all through he was a pragmatist, severely scrutinizing every formula and asking not only the academic question 'What is Truth?' but 'What difference does it make?'

What he evidently wanted to find was not truth in the sense of mechanical correspondence with fact — irrespective of value; but truth that would show the meaning of things, a clue to the difference between knowledge and opinion, good and evil, worth and worthlessness. His interest was not in the physical world, but in human beings, their relation to one another, their wish to see clearly and act wisely and their proneness to see crookedly and act in foolish ways that bring disaster. Getting and clarifying the facts, going about the solving of human problems by what we call the scientific method, did not occur to him, and if it had he could not have followed it because he had not the equipment. In all probability he would have distrusted it. The preliminary step — getting the facts — is so infinitely difficult, the temptation to build arrogantly on the scanty data of the laboratory is

so insidious, that the chance of error and complacent dogmatism would seem too great. As, for instance, in the modern application of experimental psychology to education. At any rate, he preferred and followed the way of dialectic, with its stress on imaginative trial and error, constructive fancy and analogy, definition, analysis, hypothesis and synthesis, carried on under the stimulus of relentless cross-examination. He was of the tribe of Descartes and Spinoza rather than of Bacon, of the mathematicians than of the experimental scientists. We have learned in some measure to combine mathematical reasoning with experiment. So did the Alexandrians. Plato did not.

In this Plato was a true Hellene. Speaking generally the Greek mind would have seen far less certainty in an observed fact than in, for instance, the proposition that  $2 + 2 = 4$ , far less value in an experiment than in analogy and logic, in astute speculation and keen reasoning. In observation there is the observer to consider, with his mind twisted by all sorts of preconceptions and blinded by his reliance on five gross and untrustworthy senses. In mathematics one can take wings, spurn the earth, and reach absolute and universal truth. This does not mean that Plato tried to solve the riddle of life by mathematics — only that mathematics gave him a clue, as it did to Pythagoras. For the universal truth of mathematics is made possible by getting rid of all sense attributes of a thing, all of its qualities but one that is independent of human error or personal eccentricity or time or space. This is what we call abstraction, which is like any other kind of analysis, but refers as a rule to concentration on what only the mind can apprehend, like number or direction or goodness or justice, things not real in one sense, to be sure, but immensely real in another.

But after all Plato was more of an artist than a mathematician. To say that his Ideas are logical abstractions, while it does explain some of the things he says, is only a part of the matter and the least important part. Abstraction, whether mathematical or ethical, is a purely intellectual device, enormously useful, but always assuming some larger thing from which one aspect is 'taken away' for study and manipulation, the others being ignored as irrelevant. Plato was abstracting the essentials from the accidents; not concentrating on one phase of a whole, but trying to find an all-embracing Form that is the explanation and fulfillment of all the details. A statue of Apollo may be of bronze or marble, but its essential character, its idea, is not bronze or marble, but Apollo. Moreover, Apollo is not just an outline and not just a symbol. The artist has had to conquer the stubborn material and out of the dead block of stone bring forth the god — the living form always before his mind's eye giving urge and power to his chisel; so that while in one sense the artist creates in another sense the god creates, for without Apollo there could be no statue of Apollo. Thus in the end the figure is not marble and not a man but the god — the texture of the stone and all accidental qualities subordinated to one supreme Idea. Analyze a tree into details and you will have sawdust. Analyze it to get *rid* of the details and you will find not only the real tree but God in the tree.

## IV

'Whom,' asked Glaucon in the *Republic*, 'do you call genuine philosophers?' and Socrates answered, 'Those who love to see truth.' 'With regard to the philosophic nature, let us take for granted that its possessors are ever enamored

of all the learning that will reveal to them *somewhat of the real and permanent existence* which is exempt from the vicissitudes of generation and decay.' This was no doubt the fundamental concern of Plato throughout. In the uneasy and shattered Hellenic world of the fourth century, in a city whose government had forfeited his respect and even his interest, whose religion was purely official, believed in by no intelligent person and having no relation to actual life, he was trying to find something that could not be shaken and that would be a 'way of salvation.' To guide and encourage him, he had the genius of his race for form, its passion for perfection, and the curiosity that looks not so much for origins and causes as for value, appropriateness, workability, orderly fitness. And he had inherited from his teachers the faith that gives eagerness to search, the intellectual honesty that acknowledges ignorance and makes mysticism a creed of energy and invitation. 'Philosophy begins in wonder.'

But in spite of their later reputation for subtlety, the Greeks were in the main immensely practical and Plato's flights of hypothesis were designed not to evade facts but to supplement and explain them. Idealists of later ages were to dwell much on unity and order, to consider the world's discord 'harmony not understood,' to reconcile good and evil and to see in apparent evil universal good. Plato never did. Evil is evil and discord is a fact and the world is disorderly and the only divine foreordination is the decree of Fate that if you make a mistake you pay for it. Evil is evil, but *the good is what counts*. In an actual tree there may be disease, and caterpillars may be eating the leaves. But the worms are accidents, not part of the tree. There are plenty

of discords in the world; but the task of the philosophers is to concentrate on harmony and make it prevail, not to revere or defend or excuse the discords.

Indeed in the education of children he would not show the discords at all. The growing boy will meet enough evil and disorder. What needs to be presented to him is goodness, order, beauty — all that is constructive, nothing that is poisonous. The bad and disorderly are never worth contemplating. In seeing evil and mentally sharing it we absorb it. In seeing law and growth and order and mentally sharing it we absorb that too. ‘God invented and gave us sight to the end that we might behold the courses of intelligence in the heavens and apply them to the courses of our own intelligence which are akin to them, the unperturbed to the perturbed, and that we, learning them and partaking of the natural truth of reason, might imitate the unerring courses of God and regulate our own vagaries.’<sup>1</sup> For God is not the author of all things, but the author of good and the lover of concord. Where evil comes from Plato does not inquire. It is the enemy, and our Satan might have seemed to him a happy suggestion. But from God comes only what is good, and it is God, not Satan, whose ways the wise man should consider.

The Forms are not then the fanciful creations of an ascetic mind, ingenious efforts to escape from disagreeable facts. They are the essential facts. And covering and permeating and explaining all the complex hierarchies of forms is God, the Form of Good, the one supreme Fact of the Universe, the source of all goodness, beauty, and truth, in whom we live and move and have our being. Plato’s favorite illustration for the Form of Good is the sun,<sup>2</sup> and the metaphor seems ob-

<sup>1</sup> *Timaeus*, 47.

<sup>2</sup> *Republic*, vi, 508-09.

vious enough to us, with our familiar phrases ‘the sun of righteousness,’ ‘the Light of the World,’ and our constant use of the word ‘light’ as applied to spiritual things, to knowledge and mental clarity. But to Plato the sun in being the source of light is the source of life itself. As darkness means the absence of light, ignorance and evil mean blindness to what is most real, the preference of shadow to sunlight, the refusal to be truly alive.

When we translate the phrase Form of Good into our word God — with its personal implication and its multitude of Hebrew and Christian association, we are of course taking a risk: strictly speaking God is the one untranslatable word: yet Hebrew prophet and Athenian philosopher traveled on converging roads. As the surest of all truths to a Hebrew was the conviction that ‘the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,’ so Plato is sure that ‘the essential Form of Good is the highest object of all science... and if so, if, I say, we know everything else perfectly without knowing this... it will profit us nothing.’ Plato and Christ, centuries apart in time and approaching the problem of life from radically different angles, have yet something in common. There is no better summing up of this aspect of Plato’s teaching than the words, ‘Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.’

This is, perhaps, the nearest we can come to a creed or a system of doctrine in the philosophy of Plato. He saw, as the dramatists had seen, the terrible conflict of man and fate, the problem of the world’s evil and suffering, and he found it as impossible to solve as we do. But at least he did not solve it by denying it, by looking the other way, or by what he considered the blasphemous doctrine that God is

Almighty and good, but does evil things.<sup>1</sup> His way in the face of the difficulty was the way of Phidas rather than of Sophocles: if the bad things in life cannot be explained, let us at least see that they are bad, to be regarded as distortions, diseases, misgrowths, and concentrate on what is good, i.e., constructive.<sup>2</sup> And this insistence on the constructiveness of what is good, on the blinding, paralyzing, destructive effect of what is bad, is the point at which his 'theory of ideas' touches conduct. The way of wisdom is to clear our spiritual vision, to strengthen our grasp on things fundamental. It is to achieve the serenity of *Oedipus at Colonus* and of the Parthenon gods by fixing our eye on the divine, the harmonious, the permanent, silencing life's discords by refusing to be confused by them. 'Be ye therefore perfect' could have been said by Plato and could be the initial and final text of all his dialogues — the last word of Hellenism. The Greeks themselves were past hearing it, but the world has never wholly forgotten it.

<sup>1</sup> *Republic*, II, 378 and III, 391.

<sup>2</sup> This is, of course, the central point of the whole discussion of education in *Republic*, II and III.

## CHAPTER XII

### *Alexander and the Expansion of Hellas*

WE HAVE spoken of Philip's victory over the Athenians and Thebans at Chæronea as a 'conquest of Greece.' The justice of such an expression might be questioned. Philip never called himself king of Greece and never so regarded himself. In one sense Chæronea is like Ægospotami and Leuktra, a battle that determined the primacy of one state, its 'hegemony' or leadership, its military supremacy, but not its complete political mastery over the other Greek cities. Yet careful as the great Macedonian was to treat the cities as sovereign states, more careful in some ways than either Athens or Sparta had been in their time, there was still something new in the situation. Chæronea is a really significant landmark. Philip was a king, and he was not regarded as a pure Hellene. When the cities were forced to regard him as their superior and to render him something like homage, they bowed their heads not before one of themselves, one who was temporarily stronger than they, but before a half-foreign king. It had yet to be demonstrated that Chæronea represented a final decision, but we know that it was so, and that when in due time the Macedonian power was itself shattered, it was at the hands not of the Greek states but of Rome. Never again were the city-states to be in any real sense independent.

But for the moment Philip was not anxious to awaken unnecessary hostility. He wanted the willing aid of the Greeks, if he could get it, in a supremely great enterprise.

His enemies he had to crush or render harmless before anything else could be done, but he preferred the Greeks as friends rather than as enemies. A congress of delegates from the cities was asked to meet him at Corinth. Sparta stood sullenly and impotently aloof, but all the rest obeyed. This first meeting was preliminary, the inauguration of a confederacy whose distinction lay in its being practically pan-Hellenic, whose weakness in its being held together in an unwilling unity by the iron hand of a master. Yet even an enforced unity meant power, and in any case the Greek in Philip craved a distinctively Greek commission for his adventure. At the second meeting of the congress, in 337 b.c., he laid before it his plan for an invasion of Persia. It was adopted by solemn vote, and Philip was elected general-in-chief, each city binding itself to contribute men, money, and ships to the common cause.

The king's plans were already matured, and arrangements for the war were quickly made. A portion of his army under his best general crossed the Hellespont to secure a safe footing in northwest Asia Minor. But Philip was destined never to follow. He was murdered at Pella by an obscure subject who believed himself wronged. His crown passed (336 b.c.) to his son Alexander, a boy of twenty years, who had already shown himself a spirited and capable soldier, but whose amazing genius for war was unknown and unsuspected.

Alexander's first task, naturally, was to make his title secure and to win acceptance by his father's army. This done, his second was to extinguish the sudden and dangerous flare-up of hopes that had been stirred in the Greek cities by the news of Philip's death. The Thessalians took up arms in actual revolt, and Demosthenes was urging the Athenians

to take the liberty that Fate had put into their hands. As the death of Epaminondas had ended the supremacy of Thebes so would Philip's death end that of Macedon. But the hope was speedily quenched. Alexander, disdaining to attack the Thessalians in the pass of Tempe, made a new path for his army by the sea-front of Ossa and occupied Thessaly without a battle. His march to Bœotia and the Isthmus was more rapid than the news of his coming. His enemies, caught unprepared, were forced to dissemble, and the congress at Corinth chose him as their commander-in-chief against Persia in succession to his father.

There remained the need of completing and confirming his mastery of the still unruly Thracian and Illyrian clans. But no sooner was this successfully carried through, and carried through with an impetuous rapidity and brilliant skill that already stamped him as a military leader of the first rank, than news reached him in the northern hills that Thebes had revolted and that the rising was likely to spread. He gave the hesitating, half-hearted, and wholly cautious Greeks no time to consider whether or no to join the venturesome Bœotian city. He turned southward the instant the news reached him, led his army by forced marches out of the hill country, through the pass of Thermopylæ down to Bœotia, and fell like a thunderbolt on Thebes before the dismayed Thebans had realized that he could have heard of their revolt. The city was taken and absolutely destroyed, only the house of Pindar, it is said, being spared. Alexander was never vindictive, and seldom needlessly destructive. The blotting out of Thebes we may surmise to have been a way of making absolutely sure that the thing would not occur again. He hoped soon to be a thousand miles away,

and he could not afford to leave a doubtful Greece behind him.

The firm establishment of his rule in Macedon, Greece, and Thrace, and the necessary preparation for the invasion of Asia occupied a year and a half. At last all was ready. Leaving in Pella a trusted adviser of his father, Antipater, with half of his army, he crossed the Hellespont in the spring of 334 b.c. with thirty thousand foot soldiers and five thousand cavalry.<sup>1</sup> Parmenio had conquered enough of the Troad to ensure a footing on the Asiatic shore, and the Persian fleet — strangely enough, for Alexander had no naval force of any size — failed to dispute the crossing. The young king sacrificed at the tomb of Achilles and paid due honor to the shades of the Achæan heroes who had fallen in the siege of Troy. Then he set himself steadily to his great task.

An army, formidable indeed and outnumbering his own, stiffened by a brigade of Greek mercenaries, but still by no means representing the full man-power of Persia, stood ready at the river Granicus to dispute Alexander's march southward. He attacked it with a rashness of valor and a carelessness of his own safety that was perhaps the result of his recent worship of the shade of Achilles; for Homer was his constant companion and he loved to think of himself

<sup>1</sup> For the life and campaigns of Alexander we have to rely on Quintus Curtius, a biographer of unknown date, on Arrian, who wrote in the first century A.D., and on Plutarch, a younger contemporary of Arrian. All of these writers base their accounts on contemporary and eye-witness narratives which have perished. So it is as if all seventeenth-century evidence for the doings of Cromwell were lacking, and we had to rely, say, on Green and Macaulay. In such case we must be guided simply by the apparent weight and judgment of our authority, and critics have generally agreed that Arrian and Plutarch have given us the substantial truth. The best accounts in English are those of Benjamin Ide Wheeler, *Alexander the Great*, and Hogarth, *Philip and Alexander of Macedon*.

as one of the heroes. But though he narrowly escaped death he won a complete victory, and thereafter no army barred his way through Asia Minor. For some reason, good or bad, that we can hardly even guess at now, King Darius preferred to fight the invader nearer home.

Alexander might have reasonably supposed that the Greek cities of the Asiatic coast would welcome him. He came not simply as the king of Macedon but as captain-general of the Greeks. But if he expected a peaceful and joyous reception he was soon undeceived. Some of the cities opened their gates to him, but more did not. Miletus and Halicarnassus had to be taken by storm, and even those that yielded did so from fear rather than from any Hellenic loyalty. Already Alexander, knowing, but perhaps trying not to know, the sullen attitude of the European Greeks, must have realized that his hope of uniting all the Hellenes in a willing confederacy under his leadership was a futile one. The greatest of contemporary Greek statesmen, Demosthenes, was angrily ignoring the tremendous possibilities that were opening before the Greek people, and seeking only some way to restore the greatness of his own city. Alexander was fated to work out his great destiny alone, to scatter the seeds of Hellenic civilization over the East without the co-operation that he, like his father, so greatly desired.

For the time being, the conqueror did not attempt anything like organization as he went along. He marched inland along the main roads, ensured the safe possession of important strategic points, and conquered the coast. As he did this he left the government in the hands of governors or satraps to be administered in the customary Persian way. The only difference was that he was king instead of Darius.

Just at present the military, not the administrative, problem was the pressing one. The Persian power had been humbled, but Alexander was well aware that the enemy had not yet put forth anything like his full strength, and that the decisive crisis was still to come. In the meantime it was necessary to see that Asia Minor was thoroughly convinced of the change of masters, and the young conqueror curbed his impatience while he secured the permanence of the work already done, content for the moment to let Darius play the next move in the game.

His turn came when it became evident that the supreme conflict would take place in Cilicia or in northern Syria. As soon as this was clear, he made one of his characteristic rapid marches to reach the all-important pass in the Cilician hills before his adversary;<sup>1</sup> for the 'Cilician Gates' might well have been made impregnable even to Alexander. He reached the critical position in time, however, and found that Darius was awaiting him in the plain below with perhaps 600,000 men. But Alexander was delayed in Cilicia by illness, and even after his recovery he was in no hurry to advance. He had chosen an ideal place for battle, and little chance as there was of Darius's accepting a choice so ruinous to his own hopes, yet one can understand Alexander's reluctance to leave the hills until he was compelled to. There was work

<sup>1</sup> '... covering in a day and a night, we are told, not less than sixty-two miles, and thereby succeeded in swooping on the Cilician Gates before the Viceroy of Cilicia had begun to think seriously of reinforcing his pickets in the pass. How much time and trouble the unsparing captain must have saved by that forced march may, perhaps, be estimated if we recall that until Ibrahim Pasha, little more than a half-century ago, blasted the rocks in the famous defile, every camel had to be unloaded before it could pass.' (Hogarth, *Philip and Alexander of Macedon*, p. 182.)

to be done, and the little army had to be put in the best possible condition before it could be hurled at the enormous host of the Persians with any chance of success.

Fate and the Persian king's military incapacity settled the matter better than even Alexander could have hoped. The Greek army, leaving its camp with the non-combatants at Issos, had already set out to find the enemy, when Darius, impatient and confident in his numbers, believing that his enemy was hiding or perhaps retreating, marched into the mountains by another road, reached Issos, heard of Alexander's move, realized his mistake, and began to withdraw. But Alexander had been informed of his opponent's march, and in a narrow pass bounded by the cliffs and the sea the Macedonians met the Asiatics and overcame them. Darius himself barely escaped capture. His army, as a fighting force, was blotted out. The Persian camp, with the king's wife and daughters and all the gorgeous furniture and treasure with which the luxury-loving prince saw fit to ease the hardships of war, fell into the hands of the conqueror.

Alexander was famed for his chivalry, and he lived up to his reputation. His royal captives were treated with the utmost courtesy. He was concerned not with petty triumphs, with mean or sensual pleasures, but with the carrying out of his great plan, and there lay before him Syria and Egypt. Between Cilicia and the Nile there stood only one really formidable obstacle, the great city of Tyre. But there were many cities to be occupied, many roads to be made safe, many things to be done to accomplish the transfer of authority from one king to another. The capture of Tyre alone — an island fortress separated from the mainland by a channel of sea nearly a mile and a half wide — took seven months, and

the city was reduced only by the building of a huge mole and by the aid of ships pressed into service at Sidon; for if Tyre deemed herself impregnable her sister cities of Phoenicia were under no such delusion and had transferred their allegiance while there was yet time. The great city, the wealthiest and most famous city of sea-traders in the world, was destroyed, never to rise again.

The conqueror moved on, accepting the allegiance of those wise enough to proffer it, crushing those who opposed him, until he reached Egypt. Here he found a glad welcome. The Egyptians had bitterly resented the Persian rule and had groaned under a tyranny that had made mock of their religion and their pride. If they could not be independent, then any master would be preferable to the one they had. Here in Egypt, at the Canopic mouth of the Nile, Alexander built his most famous and most lasting memorial. Seventy cities were said to have been named Alexandria, but the Egyptian Alexandria has so outshone the rest that she stands practically alone. It seems reasonable to suppose that the admirable choice of site for the new city was Alexander's own, and it is perfectly possible that he saw the likelihood of Alexandria succeeding to the commercial heritage of the fallen and ruined Tyre.

Whether he had any further vision of the city as the great fusing-point of the Greek world, as the heart of the new Greek culture — not Athenian or Ionian or Dorian, but, as we call it, Hellenistic — may be doubted. But it is not wholly out of the question. It was one of Alexander's ambitions to sow the seed of a new race that should represent the fusion of not only all the Greeks, not only Greeks and Macedonians, but Greeks and Asiatics. Steeped as he was

in Greek culture he might naturally feel that the mixed race and civilization which should emerge from the melting-pot would be predominantly Greek. But he certainly believed in the melting-pot process. And he may have foreseen with at least some degree of clearness that Alexandria was an ideal spot for his plan of fusion to bring about its best results. Such, in any event, is what happened, and some of the honor is bound to go to the founder.

Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt safely conquered and settled in their new allegiance, Alexander set forth in the spring of 331 b.c. to mete a like fate to Persia herself, the heart of the empire. He reached the Euphrates, crossed it, traversed Mesopotamia and crossed the Tigris not far from the ruins of Nineveh without meeting the enemy. Darius was deliberately allowing the invaders to swallow half his realm before making any attempt to retrieve the disaster of Issos. He had chosen his battlefield and gathered together the most warlike of his subjects, Afghans and Arabs, Kurds and Persians, wild fighters to whom war was meat and drink, a most formidable array, vastly outnumbering the Greeks. Alexander's strength was not in his individual warriors; the Greeks alone in the army of Darius were said to have outnumbered Alexander's whole army and were quite possibly the equals, man to man, of their opponents; but the Macedonian force had been trained by Philip and his son, it was homogeneous, it was a tactical unit in perfect control, and it had absolute confidence in its leader. Young as Alexander was — he was in his twenty-sixth year — and full of the pride, the foolish vanity, the impetuous recklessness of uncurbed youth, his men not only loved him for his beauty, his generosity, and his immense vitality, but saw in him the

supreme leader who could never fail. They attacked the myriads of Darius with the confidence of certain victory, and routed them as decisively as at Issos. The battle was fought near Gaugamela, and that name is sometimes given to it, but more usually it has been called the battle of Arbela from a village sixty miles away. In any case it ended the rule of the successors of Cyrus. When Darius rode from the field in full flight, he was a king without a kingdom.

The rest of Alexander's campaigns are like the closing books of an epic or the last act of a drama. Uncertainty was over. No matter how thrilling were the adventures and successes that led the great conqueror to Babylon, Susa, and Persepolis, to the shores of the Caspian and the plains of Central Asia, to the immense barrier of the Himalayas and the plains of the Punjab, it is difficult to feel quite the absorption and the exhilaration that hold and stir even the least warlike from the passage of the Hellespont to the decisive conflict beyond the Tigris. This may be partly because the hero himself seems to lose some of his heroic stature. Still a mighty leader, he yet lost some of his early self-restraint, became moody and superstitious — especially after he killed in a fit of drunken rage a friend who had once saved his life at the Granicus; was at once more suspicious, less generous, more susceptible to flattery. But part of the interest of his doings from 334 to 331 b.c. lies in the fact that their effect was more permanent. West of the Tigris Alexander was a pioneer of Hellenism; farther east he was a flashing portent, a miracle of war, an epic hero, no longer the conscious or unconscious herald of a great civilization.

At the same time it is difficult to estimate the possible value, the possible influence on western thought, of the vast

extension of the field of vision that Alexander's conquests involved. For a Greek leader with a Greek army to cross the Oxus, to make headquarters in Samarcand, to march through Turkestan and Afghanistan, to penetrate the Khyber Pass, to measure strength with the princes of India, to cross the Indus and descend the river to the sea, to dispatch an expedition which braved the terrors of the unknown Ocean from the mouth of the Indus to the head of the Persian Gulf — all this must have meant to the Greeks something of what the Crusades meant to mediæval England and France, a widened range, an immense and varied new store of information about a part of the world hitherto unknown. We know at any rate that the Hellenism of Alexandria came to be cosmopolitan as the older Hellenism had never been.

Alexander returned from India prepared to organize his empire and lay the basis for the conquest of the rest of the world. His aim was so to assimilate Greeks and Asiatics that there should be no further distinction between them. He encouraged intermarriage. He remodeled the army, mixing his Macedonians with Orientals. He selected ten thousand Persian youths for careful training in Greek manners and thought. He employed his eastern and western subjects indiscriminately in offices of trust. In every conceivable way he tried to break down the barrier between Greek and barbarian. He did not live long enough to give his dream a fair chance of realization; but that he was partly successful is evidenced by the Hellenic tinge retained by western Asia for ages after his death. Certainly the conception of a civilized realm, unified and enlightened by a common culture, extending from Epiros to India, was a tremendous one, and he gave himself no rest in his efforts to make the conception a fact.

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But in the spring of 323 B.C. as the great conqueror was preparing for a land and sea expedition for the conquest of Arabia, a fever seized him which defied his physicians. Plutarch has quoted from the court journals an account of his last days which is worth repeating, for the death of Alexander is surely one of the supremely dramatic moments in history.

On the eighteenth of the month Daesius (June 2, 323 B.C.) he slept in the bathing-room because he had a fever. On the following day, after his bath, he removed into his bed-chamber, and spent the day at dice with Medius. Then, when it was late, he took a bath, performed his sacrifices to the gods, ate a little, and had a fever through the night. On the twentieth, after bathing again, he performed his customary sacrifice; and lying in the bathing-room he devoted himself to Nearchus, listening to his story of his voyage and of the great sea. The twenty-first he spent in the same way and was still more inflamed, and during the night he was in a grievous plight, and all the following day his fever was very high. So he had his bed removed and lay by the side of the great bath, where he conversed with his officers about the vacant posts in the army, and how they might be filled with experienced men. On the twenty-fourth his fever was violent and he had to be carried forth to perform his sacrifices; moreover, he ordered his principal officers to tarry in the court of the palace, and the commanders of divisions and companies to spend the night outside. He was carried to the palace on the other side of the river on the twenty-fifth, and got a little sleep, but his fever did not abate. And when his commanders came to his bedside he was speechless, as he was also on the twenty-sixth; therefore the Macedonians made up their minds that he was dead, and came with loud shouts to the door of the palace, and threatened

his companions until all opposition was broken down; and when the doors had been thrown open to them, without cloak or armor, one by one, they all filed slowly past his couch. During this day, too, Python and Seleucus were sent to the temple of Serapis to enquire whether they should bring Alexander thither; and the god gave answer that they should leave him where he was. And on the twenty-eighth, towards evening, he died.

He left no successor. The only account of his own wishes that rests on any authority is his dying whisper — ‘To the best man.’ His generals had to fight it out. And the result was a compromise, the division of the empire between his most powerful marshals. Ptolemy became king of Egypt; Seleucus of Syria, Persia, and the East; Lysimachus of Asia Minor; Cassander of Macedon. The Greek cities regained their independence for a time, and formed two leagues, the Ætolian and the Achaian, which gave some promise of permanence. But the old evils hampered and weakened them. And when Macedon finally succumbed to the power of Rome, Greece was unable to stand alone. The Achaian League was only a flare, even though a noble one in its way. The period between Alexander and the Roman conquest was politically a mere intermission.

## CHAPTER XIII

### *The Philosophy of Greek Sculpture*

THE record of art — as a record — is less easy to interpret than that of literature and politics; analysis destroys it, and its message is too direct for our slow reason to follow with any assurance.<sup>1</sup> It is true that more persons are aware of Greek art than of Greek poetry or Greek philosophy largely because of this directness and because it is in a way a universal language — no matter how many and diverse its dialects are. But the phase of it with which we are concerned is not always apparent even to those who have genuine pleasure in the glorious lines of the Discus Thrower or the Venus of Melos. Pleasure is pleasant, not to be debated but enjoyed. Art and the beauty that is the concern of art are affairs less simple.

For beauty is not apprehended by the eye alone, and in any case to say that art is the creation of beautiful things is not to tell the whole story. Art is also and unconsciously one way of expressing a philosophy of life, not always or necessarily reconcilable with the poetic or rational ways, sometimes even in conflict with them, since most of us live — as Sir Thomas Browne puts it — in ‘divided and distinguished worlds,’ our intelligence the guide to only one of them and a Puck to all the rest. The Greek mind was, how-

<sup>1</sup> If some of the positions taken in this chapter seem dogmatic, it is for the sake of brevity, not because I regard the judgments as final, especially as they are the judgments of a ‘philosopher,’ not of an artist. Among the myriad books on the subject Percy Gardner, *Principles of Greek Art*, Ernest Gardner, *Handbook of Greek Sculpture*, and Beazley and Ashmole, *Greek Sculpture and Painting*, are, I think, the most useful.

ever, less complex than ours, its worlds less ‘divided and distinguished,’ and the Greek artist had a philosophy that was akin to that of Pythagoras and Plato just as it was akin to that of Pindar and Sophocles. Only one has to walk delicately in trying to rationalize the æsthetic, in translating the language of marble into the language of words.

We have already seen how strongly the Greek mind was dominated by form — a word which we might very well replace by the Greek word *idea*. Now the discovery of form in sculpture was relatively late. Before the Persian wars only one of the plastic arts had achieved anything like the perfection of epic and lyric poetry. This was the simplest of them, pottery. In the making of vases of all kinds the Greeks had had before them very beautiful models that were nevertheless disregarded. The Minoan potters may very well have taught the Greeks the elements of their craft, but Greek pottery is not Minoan or anything like Minoan. For during the transition from the Cretan civilization to the Hellenic the ceramic artists were setting forth on new trails. At first their work — all of it interesting and some of it beautiful — was yet for the most part clumsy, experimental, and uncertain. But they gradually found themselves and made designs that became permanent, permanent because they were perfect. We of today look askance at the implication of fixity in the word ‘perfection,’ for to us fixity is itself an imperfection. But the Greeks felt otherwise, striving as they did for absolute rightness of form, attaining it, and resting in it. At any rate the result was standardization on a limited but high level. The infinite variations and eccentricities of our modern dishes, utensils, and ornaments were unknown.

They did allow one kind of variety, however. The vases were adorned with pictures of amazing simplicity and charm — all that we have of Greek painting — and these pictures would alone give us our clue to the essential character of Greek art in its entire history. They are pictures without background — figures of few lines, a minimum of detail, no perspective, and hardly any attempt at realistic coloring. They were usually red figures on a black ground or black figures on a red ground, though some very beautiful vases have varicolored figures on a white ground. To one not an artist their beauty is as perplexing as it is unquestionable, for the human forms in which the Greek artists then and always delighted were stiff, emotionless, and expressionless. Yet these strangely rigid and conventional designs were somehow alive too and were infinitely varied in theme, portraying men and women, gods and heroes, mythical adventures and prosaic occupations, all holding an endless fascination even if Heracles might kill his lion and the music-master teach his pupil to play the flute with the same unmoved composure. Perhaps, indeed, that is half the secret of the fascination. The story is told in adequate — but no more than adequate — outline. The idea is there, hard, clear, unshaded, and unmistakable. The details of emotion and effort are not the artist's affair.<sup>1</sup>

But up to the sixth century sculpture was still an unlearned art, its carven figures incredibly grotesque, even ugly, an astonishment to any modern who, meeting it for the first time, is told that it is Greek. With the end of the sixth century and the early years of the fifth, it was still stiff, but no longer ugly, as if the artists knew at last what they wanted to

<sup>1</sup> Useful books on Greek pottery are Walters, *History of Ancient Pottery*, and Robbin, *Attic Red-figured Vases*.

do, but lacked the ease and freedom of skilled craftsmanship. This was the age of Æschylus and the new Athenian democracy and the victory over Persia. Then a change occurred, or rather a change already begun moved more swiftly and surely, reflecting the new confidence and consciousness of power that issued from the age of Marathon and Salamis. Myron was living when the remnant of the Persian host fled northward after Platæa, and perhaps Polycleitus, and these two with a younger sculptor greater than either began, in the days of Cimon and Pericles and the Athenian Empire, the history of Greek sculpture as we now think of it. Less than fifty years after the defeat of Xerxes the finished Parthenon stood on the Acropolis, adorned with the masterpieces carved under the direction of Phidias.<sup>1</sup> At one leap the arts of building and sculpture had reached their peak, a rapidity of achievement that seems as miraculous as the sudden forming

<sup>1</sup> The Parthenon is an oblong building 228 feet by 100, standing on the south side of the Acropolis, i.e., to your right as you ascend to the summit of the Rock by the stairway (Propylæa) at its western end. It consists of a double inner chamber (the *cella*) surrounded by thirty-four-foot Doric columns, i.e., columns rising directly from the floor, fluted from bottom to top in broad, shallow, sharp-edged channels, and headed by a plain, rounded 'cushion' and a square block on which rests the architrave or stone beam that supports the gabled roof. The cornice, outside, consists of alternate triglyphs (each made like the ends of three beams) and metopes or spaces between the triglyphs, each filled with a simple, two-figured group. The frieze, running around the outer wall of the cella — to many observers the supreme product of Greek art — represents the annual Panathenaic procession. The pediments are the triangular spaces of the east and west gables, each containing a group representing at one end the birth of Athena, at the other the conflict between Athena and Poseidon for the possession of Athens. The whole temple was made of Pentelic marble, its decorations painted in bright colors. It was terribly damaged by an explosion in 1687 and most of the pediment figures are broken almost beyond restoration.

of a crystal and as instructive in its way as the writing of *Hamlet* within thirty years of the building of the first London theater.

All the world knows the beauty of the Parthenon and its sculptured decorations, but beauty is a large and often vague word. Now the beauty of these reliefs has a specific character, so specific that any single section of the frieze would illustrate the strength and weakness of not only Greek art but the Greek mind. It is expressed in Keats' famous line: Beauty is truth, truth beauty — understanding by truth not a concourse of facts, not even the total sum of facts, but the essential clue, the key, the unifying and explaining idea that illuminates and harmonizes those facts, i. e., gives them form. The more the artist could reveal that idea, that essential form, unhampered and unobscured by irrelevant details, the nearer he came to the beauty that was truth, the truth that was beauty. Details there must be, as there must be words in a poem, but every one of them must contribute to the idea — not be subordinate merely, but contribute to it as each instrument in an orchestra contributes to the rendering of a symphony.

Thus the Parthenon itself was not just a building, but a temple; not just a temple, but a temple dedicated to the magnificent goddess Athena. To make it, like many of our modern churches, domestic, 'pretty,' a comfortable gathering place in which right-minded people could share burdens and blessings and be aided on the perilous road to Heaven was not the purpose of the builders in the least. It was not a church, but a temple, raised to the honor of Athena, where the minds of the worshipers should be turned to the things that the goddess cared for. Any decoration inappropriate to this 'idea,' however lovely it might be in itself — if 'in itself'

means anything — had to be sternly excluded. And this general principle holds for every group and every figure.

So that one who expects to see in the reliefs of the Parthenon only finished technique, perfect lines, and the sensuous charm of beautiful human figures will not be disappointed, indeed, but he will have missed the main purpose of the artist. These things were to him means to an end — the exaltation of Athena. As the visitors to the temple looked at the glorious young horsemen of the frieze they saw the goddess. The individuals who took part in the actual procession, even the best of them, fell far short of perfection. But it must not be so with the forms in the temple. They must be perfect<sup>1</sup> — true to an ideal that a nobly made man might approximate and suggest — for man is, after all, a child of the gods — but that the artist must try to fulfill and reveal. He might fail, but he had to try. His function was not to hold a mirror up to nature and not to give pleasure, but to show the divine perfection that would inspire men's efforts to attain it themselves. 'Be ye perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect' comes close to saying what the Greek sculptor was preaching in the relentless severity and simplicity of his marble sermon. To us such perfection may be impossible, such an ideal infinite, even a contradiction in terms. To a Greek it was not impossible at all, or infinite, only a matter of clear notions, absolute recognition of the *idea*, and skilled technique.

We have to forget, in fact, the mystic sense that we attach to perfection and take the word literally. Otherwise we conceive the sculptor as living and working in an edifying dream, his 'ideal' men and gods as not real but imaginative projections, as it were, of certain qualities. Now when we speak of

<sup>1</sup> From *per* and *facere* — done, finished, completed, lacking nothing.

idealism in Greek art it is Platonic idealism that is meant, the grasp of the 'essential thing' as opposed to what is accidental, not the idealism of modern philosophical usage or the idealism that means the having of ideals or the idealism that implies having one's head in the clouds; and one important aspect of Plato's Idea or Form is its character of universality and changelessness.

How then could the sculptor make an individual universal? He could, perhaps, do it by a sort of abstraction, eliminating individuality, personality, the veil of obtrusive accidents which blocks the way to understanding, and this is what John Ruskin thought the Greek artists did. 'There is no personal character in true Greek art — abstract ideas of youth and age, strength and swiftness, virtue and vice — yes; but there is no individuality.'<sup>1</sup> Such an impression is not uncommon, partly perhaps because of Ruskin's pronouncement, but he made it in a careless moment, for it is certainly not true. It will hold as regards many of the fifth-century *faces* and many of the later copies, but not of the fourth-century masterpieces at all. Besides, no Greek would have understood our stress on the face as an index of personality. Every muscle in the body had its function of expression. Dancing was a fine art, not for the few, as with us, but for everyone, and its infinitely subtle rhythmic language of gesture and pose and movement was

<sup>1</sup> *Aratra Pentelici*. The adjective 'personal' is of course the critical word here. *Persona*, as in *dramatis personæ*, has the original meaning of a mask — the mask worn by an actor to conceal his ordinary self and make him an Agamemnon or an Electra. So personality might mean the combination of manners, habits, eccentricities that do not reveal the real self, but obscure it — the mask that we wear as we take our part in the comedy or tragedy of life. None of us would accept such a definition, but it expresses part of an age-old puzzle, and it is the only definition that would make Ruskin's statement accurate.

familiar to every sculptor. The face of the Discus Thrower might express only the impassiveness of supreme concentration, but every line of the figure told the rest of the story — an ‘ideal’ athlete, indeed, but all the more ‘real’ in being so.

That is to say, the artist did try to find the universal and eternal as truly as Pythagoras and Plato did, only not by the way of abstraction. There is a difference between an abstraction and an integration. The more perfect an athlete is as an individual, the more perfectly he shows the finished and final form of an athlete. The more perfectly Apollo is expressed as Apollo, the more of a god he is. The stern instruction of Oliver Cromwell to Lely — ‘Paint me as I am’ — would have been entirely satisfactory to a Praxiteles if the *I* were underlined. And in each case the thing is done by emphasizing what makes the athlete an athlete, the god a god, Cromwell Cromwell — emphasizing what counts and ignoring what does not count. The real individual need not include the blemishes any more than a tree needs to include its caterpillars.

Portraiture was indeed never favored by the Greek sculptors, presumably because the distinction between blemish and characteristic was and is often difficult to make, so commonly do we by long use blend together, in one we admire, the accidental but established oddities with the features that are truly expressive. Type figures — a god, a hero, a symbol — presented no such difficulty, so these were preferred from beginning to end.<sup>1</sup> But each figure was an individual none the less, not an abstraction or a composite. When the painter

<sup>1</sup> This might apply also to those who were dead — as in the many beautiful tombstone reliefs — where physical details no longer mattered and the figures might be ‘idealized’ with entire appropriateness.

studied a hundred beautiful women in order to paint Helen, it was still Helen that emerged, not the most beautiful of the models or a mixture of all of them.

What has just been said was true of Greek art in the main to the very end. But the stress on what was universal and eternal might — and often did — involve a stress on finality, repose, serenity, rather than on the urge and desire that is so great a part of being alive. Query, was this stress proper? There was no doubt regarding the aim at perfection, and perfection meant always to a Greek artist not only faultless technique but the clear revelation of ‘the essential thing.’ Only the question might arise as to what is essential. In the specific case of a temple to Athena the answer may be clear. It would not be so clear in practically any of the subjects chosen, for instance, by the great modern painters and sculptors, and in so far as they do indicate an answer it would not be that of a fifth-century Greek. As there is an element in a Gothic cathedral that is not in the Parthenon, so there is an element — to a modern mind one of very great significance — in Michelangelo that is not in Phidias. In short, one might bow in reverence before the Parthenon frieze and yet find something vital lacking in it.

But the Greeks saw this themselves. Xenophon records an interesting saying of Socrates, the saying that ‘it is the business of the sculptor to represent in bodily form the energies of the spirit, *psyches erga*.’ Energy is certainly not the word that one would select to associate with fifth-century sculpture any more than with fifth-century tragedy, and Socrates may well have been expressing a kind of criticism and remonstrance that was in the air, a feeling that action and passion are no less artistic, even no less divine, than the serenity of achieve-

ment. At any rate, a change in this direction was becoming evident in Socrates' later years, when the Athenian Empire was falling apart and the confusions of the fourth century were beginning to distress and menace the sure vision of the age of Pericles. There appeared a clear difference of opinion and emphasis, and the Greek critics used two words to describe the difference, *ethos* and *pathos*, roughly translatable as character and feeling, that which is eternal and that which is passing, the changeless and the changing.<sup>1</sup> So little by little the majestic idealism of the Parthenon age gave place to the art of Praxiteles, Lysippus, and Scopas, art that was less remote, more alive, touched with the sentiment, the forward look, the interest in action and struggles, the 'energies of the spirit' that Phidias thought it best to restrain.<sup>2</sup>

Important as this change was there was no revolution. *Pathos* did not displace *ethos* — Praxiteles and his successors did not overthrow the tradition of Phidias. They only gave to it a wider range. From Myron to Scopas they were still feeling their way toward the creation of things absolutely beautiful because absolutely true. Some elements that Phidias might not have allowed — or might have allowed with doubt and hesitation — were adopted with joy and confidence

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the difference between Parmenides and Heraclitus, the stress on Being and on Becoming (see above, pp. 137–38). The most characteristic Greek thinkers inclined to the Being philosophy and so did the sculptors. But the philosophy of Becoming was never forgotten and was pondered more and more as the fourth century went on. Phidias was the ally, so to speak, of Parmenides — Scopas of Heraclitus.

<sup>2</sup> Examples of this are the decorations of the Mausoleum (the tomb of Mausolus, prince of Caria, erected by his wife about 350 B.C.), the Winged Victory of the Louvre, and the Sidon sarcophagus at Constantinople. The possibilities of excess and degradation are seen in the Laocoön group of the Vatican and the Farnese Bull at Naples. For the facts regarding these see Ernest Gardner, *History of Greek Sculpture*.

by those who came after him. And the result was no loss of power, no retreat from the search for the eternally significant — only a daring to include in sculpture what Aeschylus and Sophocles as well as Euripides had attempted in drama, the recognition and portrayal of something eternally positive in suffering and failure, in the clash of human desire with divine law. A modern lover of Greek art might not be willing to say that the Mausoleum reliefs are an improvement on those of the Parthenon, but he would be reluctant to admit decline and he might very well find Scopas more congenial than Phidias.

Certainly the fourth century saw not only increased skill and freedom and power to bring beautiful forms out of marble, and not only increased willingness to recognize aspiration and conflict. It reflected also a steady advance toward the solution of a problem that the Greek mind dearly loved, that the modern mind still finds perplexing, but that the modern artist rarely thinks of — the effort to see the individual as universal, sacrifice as the only road to peace. It was a problem that had to be left unsolved, but the artists came nearer to a solution than the philosophers did, facing the facts of a stormy world and yet clinging stubbornly to their faith in an ultimate and attainable beauty and truth.<sup>1</sup>

We of today are perhaps more interested in the social and ethical forms of the puzzle than the metaphysical or the artistic, the harmonizing of social well-being and individual freedom. But in some form or other it is one of the most familiar and most baffling difficulties that a thoughtful civilized mind has to face. It is the wager of Mephistopheles and

<sup>1</sup> The well-known Dying Gaul is a good example of this effort to see a possible constructiveness in clash and failure.

the Almighty in Faust. It is the problem of law and liberty, of contentment and ambition, of determinism and free-will, of self-restraint and self-expression, and to many earnest minds it is the problem of a good, orderly, all-powerful God and a bad, disorderly, and suffering world. These are in a sense contradictions, and to most of us — because we are not particularly logical and because we easily fall back on a sort of philosophical mysticism — a contradiction or a logical blind alley is not oppressive. To the Greeks — except for the minority who followed Heraclitus — it was grievously so, for they loved clearness and hated either compromise or surrender, yearning for the definable and the measurable, holding a firm faith in a discoverable answer to all riddles.

But the riddle of life is after all the supreme one, and it is futile to deny either the happiness of effort or the happiness of achievement. So to set before oneself the calm gods of the Parthenon and the dynamic figures of the Sidon sarcophagus is to see not two conflicting views of what is beautiful, but two answers to the eternal question of value that are somehow both true and therefore reconcilable. Or are they? At all events, like the Greeks we have not yet reconciled them, but again like the Greeks we refuse to dismiss either of them. Only we cling to change as a more essential character than stability. The Greeks, with all their restless changeableness, saw stability as more essential than change.

Perhaps, though, beauty and truth — themselves absolute and changeless — may *cause* change, be in a way dynamic. As the vision of the artist becomes clearer and his search for perfection brings its reward, his forms may turn out to be not only lovely to contemplate, but living sources of energy, able,

like the rays of the sun, to awaken life as well as to give light. If so, Parmenides and Heraclitus might be reconciled after all, and Being and Becoming, logically opposites, might be essential to one another. This was the view of Plato, the supreme interpreter of Greek idealism, contemporary of Praxiteles and Scopas, yet spiritually akin to Phidias.

In the dialogue called the *Republic*, Plato makes Socrates outline a plan of education — a plan that no normal school or teachers' college of today would sanction as either practical or psychologically sound, but that is nevertheless the most brilliant and suggestive educational program ever set forth.<sup>1</sup> An important element in it is music (*mousike*) which includes not only music in our sense, but all studies and activities that we should call æsthetic, intellectual, spiritual — all, in short, that were presided over by the Muses. And quite early in the discussion there emerges one clear conviction, that the important thing for the child is the direction of his tastes and interests along constructive lines, selected on the basis of *what is best*, i.e., what is essential, the Idea. Knowledge, as we understand it, comes in hardly at all. The point is that the child should learn unconsciously to know and like what is good, beautiful, and wholesome, and so far as possible to associate with nothing else. Stories, songs, literature — all that Plato meant by music — should be carefully censored, all ugliness, all that induces cruelty, treachery, cowardice, meanness, and fear eliminated, just as we eliminate from diet unwholesome and poisonous food. But if this is so of stories and songs, should not the same principle apply to things seen and used? Should not — in the terms of our discussion — the rule of

<sup>1</sup> *Republic*, II and III, continued in VI and VII.

building and decoration that applied to the Parthenon be a rule applying to everything used or seen or heard?

[For beauty and ugliness, good and evil] enter largely into painting and all similar workmanship, into weaving and embroidery, into architecture, as well as the whole manufacture of utensils in general; for in all these things gracefulness or ungracefulness finds place. And the absence of grace and rhythm and harmony is closely allied to an evil character, whereas their presence is allied to and expressive of the opposite character.

That being the case ought we to confine ourselves to superintending our poets and compelling them to impress on their productions the likeness of a good character on pain of not composing among us; or ought we to extend our superintendence to the professors of every other craft as well, and forbid them to impress those signs of an evil nature, of dissoluteness, of meanness, and of ungracefulness, either on the likenesses of living creatures or on buildings or on any other work of their hands; altogether interdicting such as cannot do otherwise from working in our city, that our guardians may not be reared amongst images of vice, as upon unwholesome pastures, culling much every day by little and little from many places, and feeding upon it, until they insensibly accumulate a large mass of evil in their souls? Ought we not, on the contrary, to seek out artists of another stamp, who by the power of genius can trace out the nature of the fair and the graceful, that our young men dwelling as it were in a healthful region, may drink in good from every quarter, whence any emanation from noble works may strike upon their eye or their ear, like a gale wafting health from salubrious lands, and win them imperceptibly from their earliest childhood into resemblance, love, and harmony with the true beauty of reason?<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Republic*, III, 401.

It may be said that Plato is here idealizing idealism, which might be taken either as a complaint or a justification. But one hardly dares not to take into account an interpretation of art so absolutely Hellenic, charged as it is with an undying hope, desire, faith — whatever one likes to call it — in the redeeming power of beauty. Greek idealism meant the sacrifice of much that we value. But what seems to some a too coldly intellectual search for the essential, a too ruthless elimination of background, irrelevancies, inappropriate but warmly human details, a too severe rationalism that because it is rational invites rational criticism, becomes less vulnerable when it is seen as a kind of poet's dream. So far as it is a response to an infinite wish for perfection, infinite no matter how urgently it tries to be finite, the poet's dream is like religion in that it defies reason and facts alike and dies only to rise again in new incarnations. We want to believe it. But we are left face to face with a puzzle, nevertheless, the same puzzle that Ruskin saw in the degradation of Venice under the very glow of the Bible of Saint Mark's. Greek art kept its glory — fading slowly, but still a marvel to all the world — or centuries after the victory of Macedon, like a flag still flying when the ramparts that support it are crumbling. And we still look at the Parthenon frieze and wonder whether there must always be such a gap between the dream and the reality. Or whether the philosopher and the artist alike would answer that the dream was the reality, itself eternal even if the people who eddied by the great columns failed to apprehend it.

## CHAPTER XIV

### *Aristotle*

**A**BOUT three years after the Peace of Antalkidas, when the Spartan power, the money and intrigues of Persia, and the incurable jealousies of the cities had practically shattered every dream of a free and united Greek state, and when on the other hand Greek art was at its zenith and the greatest of Greek thinkers was in the prime of life, there was born in a northern colony — Stagira — near the Macedonian frontier, the man who was to sum up, to classify, to put into clear form the wisdom of the Greeks.

Plato was by temperament a critic, a poet, a prophet. Sure of his aim, penetrating and dazzling in his intuition, unrelenting in his intolerance of falsities and irrelevancies, he was yet never so sure that he had attained finality that he was willing to put his doctrines in treatise form. Aristotle had in him little of Plato's prophetic power and insight. His was a clear-eyed, methodical, scientific mind, with a passion for facts and for defined statement. Whether or not he wrote dialogues in his early manhood, following the lead of his master, is of little consequence. His permanent work is embodied in systematic treatises or 'courses' of lectures, utterly unlike the Platonic dialogues, surveys of every subject in which the Greek mind was interested — ethics, politics, rhetoric, the art of poetry, natural science, logic, and metaphysics.<sup>1</sup> And this clearness and definiteness of statement

<sup>1</sup> He did not himself use the word 'metaphysics.' It was the name given by his followers to one of his books, practically an editorial accident, and the name has been both retained for the book and applied in use to all thought directed toward an ultimate explanation of life.

and arrangement made Aristotle seem to many who came after him a master, a teacher, an authoritative expounder of the 'wisdom of the ancients' in a peculiar and supreme sense. Ages later, when that wisdom was 'revived' by the universities, he seemed, to use Dante's famous phrase, 'the master of those who know.'

On the authority of Diogenes Laertius, a gossiping and ill-informed, but by no means uninteresting, writer of the third or fourth century A.D. and of his quotations from Apollodorus (about 140 B.C.), we have a few alleged facts about the life of Aristotle. These are, in brief, that he was born in 384 B.C., that he studied twenty years under Plato, that he was the tutor of Alexander of Macedon, that he settled in Athens about 335 B.C. and taught there for thirteen years at the Lyceum, that he went to Chalcis in 322 B.C. and died there in that year. That some of this is true is likely enough. So careful a scholar as Sir Alexander Grant accepts all of it as 'probably authentic,' and even the most skeptical of critics agree that the final fact is correct, Aristotle's death in 322 B.C.

At any rate, we give the account for what it is worth. It would be interesting and profitable to know more, for even when a great man has embodied the best he has to give in his books, it often adds much to our understanding of his thought if we can know something of his personal life and personal problems. But in the case of Aristotle as in the case of Plato we must be content for the most part to take his works as we find them. Even these are sometimes broken and fragmentary, reminding one of a student's lecture notes rather than of a finished and revised book of the modern sort, and they have obviously suffered sorely from time, copyists, and

editors. But they are enough to explain and confirm Aristotle's almost inestimably high place in the history of reflection. For many centuries his fame rested on his *Logic*, the only part of his work that was known to western Europe from the fifth century to the twelfth. To us his most significant books are the *Ethics* and the *Politics*, and after these the *Poetics* and the *Metaphysics*. It is to these that we must turn if we would know him as the successor of Socrates and Plato.

Plato had left two clearly indicated steps of advance open to the thinkers who should come after him. In the first place, his philosophy was informal and unformed, worked out almost casually in conversation, without any attempt to give it system or to bring any of his conclusions to a final analysis and demonstration. In the second place, his theory of the relation between appearance and reality was still — so to speak — in the air; his ideas, asserted to be real, were yet to the average mind unreal, belonging to an invisible and intangible world, not clearly related to the world that we know through our senses. He saw this himself, and feeling strongly that this apparent separation was due only to the ignorance and blindness of the human mind, he strove manfully to bridge the gulf. In one sense he succeeded, at least far enough for us to see clearly now the main direction of his thought. But he did not succeed quite completely enough to keep his followers from an unprofitable and deceptive scorn of the world as we see and touch it, the world of phenomena.

To this double task of giving form and coherence to philosophy and of making the theory of ideas solid, intelligible, consistent, and practical, Aristotle bent his mind with wonderful power. In the matter of formulating, clarifying,

rounding out, and systematizing the wisdom he had inherited, he succeeded so completely that his work stood untouched and unapproachable almost to our own time. His formulas and his careful generalizations enter even now into the very warp and woof of our thought. His *Ethics* and *Politics* might be used profitably as texts in a twentieth-century college. They contain things that we cannot now accept, and we must constantly criticize, modify, and amplify his statements, but we have to do this with books written five years ago. In no sense that really matters are they out of date. We cannot say this, obviously, of his works on natural science, now little more than historical curiosities, but even these long held a place of undisputed authority, and it took centuries for the world to learn a new and more fruitful road of advance. So in the matter of formulation we may say that Aristotle succeeded. In the rounding out and completing of idealism or supplying a theory of existence that would improve on Plato's, he did not succeed so well. But he supplemented Plato's thought and added a new and interesting element to it by approaching the matter in a new way — a way suggested by Plato but never developed.

Plato's prime interest was, of course, in universal truths. His followers naturally concluded that particular facts and phenomena were of no importance; the universal was everything, and once it was grasped particulars would fall into their proper place. The dangers of this are obvious, and these dangers Aristotle saw so clearly that he decided to reverse the process. He does not dispute the value of universal truths, but he tries to reach them by examining particulars. Instead of asserting that the individual plant or table or animal is unreal because it changes and passes away, whereas there is

an ideal plant or table or animal that is real and eternal — which was the popular form of Plato's theory of ideas — he examines the thing in question and tries to see what is fundamental (i.e., ideal) by finding its essential nature in its function and in its completed end. It is as if one explained the nature of the seed by pointing to the flower, the rough sketch by the completed work of art, the child by the man. Aristotle did indeed believe in an absolute, but often he came close to denying it because it seemed so unprofitable. He believed in the theory of ideas, but as taught in the Academy<sup>1</sup> he denied it because it seemed a playing with words. Yet in the long run his philosophy was Plato's, restated, amplified, looked at from a different angle, divested of much of its beauty and much of its power, but divested also, no doubt, of its tempting and dangerous mysticism.

Aristotle's answer to the riddle of life is to be found in the *Nicomachean Ethics*<sup>2</sup> and the *Politics*, two books which may be viewed in a sense as two volumes of the same work. The *Ethics* begins with an investigation of the supreme good, that which makes all lesser goods intelligible; the *Politics* ends with an all too incomplete study of education, a study that closes so abruptly that one feels as if only the stroke of death could account for the sudden silence in the mid-point of the discussion. From these two works, not always consistent, not always clear, but firm in touch, tenacious in pursuit, honest and unfaltering in logic, we may be able to illustrate

<sup>1</sup> The place in Athens where Plato taught and so for ages the school of Plato, just as the school of Aristotle was the Lyceum.

<sup>2</sup> So called from Nicomachus, Aristotle's son, who was generally thought to have edited or even to have written the book. The name was used to distinguish this authentic account of Aristotle's own view from the *Eudemian Ethics* and the *Great Ethics* (so called). See Grant, *Ethics of Aristotle*, I, Essay I.

Aristotle's interpretation of Greek thought and its tendencies in the fourth century.

What, then, is the *unum necessarium*, if there be one? Knowledge and love of the Form of Good, Plato had said. This Aristotle rejects as vague and unreal.

Even if there is some... abstract and absolute good, it will plainly not be such as a man finds practicable and attainable, and therefore will not be such a good as we are in search of. It will possibly be held, however, that it is worth while to apprehend this universal good, as having a relation to the goods which are attainable and practicable; for if we have this as a model we shall be better able to know the things which are good relatively to ourselves, and knowing them, to acquire them. Now, although there is a certain plausibility in this theory, it seems not to harmonize with scientific experience; for while all sciences aim at a certain good and seek to supply a deficiency, they omit the knowledge of the universal good. Yet it is not reasonable to suppose that what would be so extremely helpful is ignored, and not sought at all by artists generally. But it is difficult to see what benefit a cobbler or carpenter will get in reference to his art by knowing the absolute good, or how the contemplation of the absolute idea will make a better physician or general.<sup>1</sup>

How far this characteristic criticism of Plato's Absolute Good is valid need not be discussed here in any detail. So far as Plato's own teaching is concerned, Aristotle misses the point entirely, of course. He constantly misquotes and dis-

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, *Ethics*, I, 4. All references will be to Welldon's translation of the *Ethics* and to Jowett's translation of the *Politics*. For a critical appreciation of Aristotle's attitude to Plato on this point, see Grant, *Ethics of Aristotle*, I, Essay III, and Stewart's note on this chapter (I, 4) in *Notes on the Nicomachean Ethics*.

torts, and the most pregnant passages of the dialogues were too alien to his temperament to be understood or even studied with any patience. But his reaction is interesting in its own way, nevertheless, and is no doubt pertinent enough as against the tendency of Plato's disciples to make the Form of Good a mere metaphysical formula. At any rate, he tries to find the answer to the question 'What is good?' in a different way and he does add some light. Instead of an Absolute Good — a conception which he accepts in the *Metaphysics* and discusses there, but which seems to him too vague, unreal, and unproven to have any practical value for conduct — he suggests that there are in fact many 'goods,' and that the good of any one thing is to be found in its function and its function alone as leading to an appropriate end. There is a good peculiar to a flower or an ox, a builder or a physician, and there is a good for man which may well be taken as our ultimate standard and aim if we can only discover it.

To find this supreme good for man he asks himself whether there is anything that all men want not simply as a means to an end — such as food or money or power — but as a supremely desirable end in itself. This good desired by all he finds to be Happiness. But lest he be misunderstood he hastens to explain that Happiness really means a perfect functioning of one's essential nature. Man's distinctive nature is rational and moral. His Good, therefore, i.e., his Happiness, must be in the perfect functioning of his rational and moral being — 'an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue.' An activity, a function, be it noted, not a state. And 'in accordance with virtue' simply means 'in the best, i.e., the most appropriate, the most effective way.' If it were

possible in English as it was for Aristotle in Greek to speak of a virtuous and happy rose or lion, one would mean by such words a rose or lion that functions as such most perfectly. So with a man. Human goodness and human happiness are alike realized in the man who functions perfectly *as a man*, i.e., as a being whose essential nature is rational and spiritual.

Happiness is then quite a different thing from pleasure. It is active, rational virtue and lies in being one's best self, whereas pleasure is a mere sensation, often fleeting, often deceptive, often paid for by degradation and pain. But at the same time Happiness is by no means to be *contrasted* with pleasure. On the contrary, the life of the good man is sure to be a pleasant one. 'For pleasure is a psychical fact, and whatever a man is said to be fond of is pleasant to him; e.g., a horse to one who is fond of horses, just action to a lover of justice, and virtuous actions in general to a lover of virtues.... Actions in accordance with virtue are pleasant in themselves.' So the virtuous man will be a happy man, and will find pleasure in the exercise of virtue.

But when Aristotle follows this out to its logical conclusion, he reaches something with which a modern mind finds it a little hard to associate either pleasure as usually understood or virtue as usually understood. The real good for man which is to be truly called Happiness is found to consist in what Aristotle calls *Theoria*, the contemplative life. Such a conclusion is at first startling; yet it is perfectly consistent, far as this seems to be from his insistence on a definite, tangible good which one may see and aim at. If man's happiness is to be found in his perfect realization as a rational being, then surely he will have found perfect

happiness only when he can rid himself entirely of external things and devote himself wholly to contemplation, the untrammelled exercise of his reason. And logically this rational activity must be devoted to an object no lower than itself, or else — like the life of honor or sensual pleasure — it will be no longer self-sufficient. So Aristotle made God, as the absolutely perfect rational Being, absorbed in active and perpetual self-contemplation<sup>1</sup> — a notion that took root and never quite lost its place in later speculations about the Divine nature.

But so far as the thought of Aristotle is concerned, we must not take this argument of his too seriously. It illustrates only the difficulties of the philosophic mind when it is relentlessly following a clue into the cloudland of metaphysical logic. It makes Aristotle's chief good for man infinitely less dynamic than Plato's Form of Good. But he does not stop with this. He sees himself that the contemplative activity which is Happiness and the supreme good for man must be more clearly related to life, and to this end it is necessary to look more closely into the phrase 'in accordance with virtue.' The virtue of anything in Aristotle's sense is simply the quality by which its nature is realized, the moral state that 'has the effect of producing a good condition of that of which it is a virtue or excellence and of enabling it to perform its function well.' Which sounds complicated but yields a meaning when examined. So with his usual tenacity he comes back to his first argument concerning goodness. The adjective 'good' applied to a rose, a horse, a man, has a different and appropriate meaning in each case. But it serves the same general purpose in all cases, and when we ask

<sup>1</sup> *Metaphysics*, XII.

again what we mean by 'good for man' and insist on a plain answer, we find that it is absurdly simple — so simple that it is confusing. Instead of goodness being a tremendous, animating Idea, we have 'good' as just a useful description, a fair equivalent to our much-used 'efficient,' and 'goodness' nothing after all but an abstract noun. Which also is not to be taken too seriously, though the issue thus raised — whether all 'universals' are only names — was to be savagely and endlessly debated in the universities of the future. Aristotle himself was quite undisturbed by his own reasoning, and went serenely on with his inquiry into goodness and happiness as if their reality were not in question.

In one respect all of this discussion of goodness seems strange to a modern because of what is to us a curious omission. The conception of duty — the reluctant doing of a thing because it is right — does not seem to occur to Aristotle as an admirable motive at all, any more than it had to Plato. We have already seen in Plato's remarks on primary education that he emphasized not discipline in the sense of stern repression of desire, but the cultivation of desires that are good. With this Aristotle quite agreed. A moral act is not for him one done unwillingly from a sense of duty or obedience to a command, but one done willingly because of an *inner harmony with* the command.

The pleasure or pain which follows upon actions may be regarded as a test of a person's moral state. He who abstains from physical pleasure and feels delight in so doing is temperate; but he who feels pain at so doing is licentious. He who faces danger with pleasure, or at least without pain, is courageous; but he who feels pain at facing it is a coward.... Hence the importance of having

had a certain training from very early days, as Plato says, *such a training as produces pleasure and pain at the right objects*; for this is the true education.<sup>1</sup>

There are then two fundamental elements in the rational activity of the soul in accordance with virtue. One is purely intellectual, the other moral. One relates to intelligence, wisdom, knowledge, and has its perfection in the contemplative life. But this can never attain its end without the moral activities that imply control. Wisdom can be taught, and indeed it is by teaching that it is mainly fostered. But moral virtue is the outcome of habit. Wisdom and virtue are alike based on heredity, on tendencies implanted in us. No amount of teaching can make a stone wise, and no amount of habituation can make it fall up instead of down. The laws of our being, that is to say, constitute our absolute starting-point. But they only make us *potentially* good or bad. That potentiality becomes actual through habit. By building well we become good builders; by building badly we become bad builders.

[So] it is by doing just acts that we become just, by doing temperate acts we become temperate, by doing courageous acts we become courageous. The experience of states is a witness to this truth, for it is by training the habits that legislators make the citizens good. This is the object which all legislators have at heart; if a legislator does not succeed he fails of his purpose, and it constitutes the distinction between a good government and a bad one.<sup>2</sup>

To this basing of moral training on habit Aristotle adds one great principle that should guide us in the selection and

<sup>1</sup> *Ethics*, II, 2; compare *Republic*, III, 401-02, and IV, 424-25.

<sup>2</sup> *Ethics*, II, 2; compare *Republic*, III, 401-02 and IV, 424-25.

emphasis of the activities whose habitual *energeia* spells virtue — the principle of the Mean. The ancient Greek feeling for measure, the middle way between excess and defect, is to Aristotle the only safe guide. The doctrine of the Mean is nothing new, and it had been presented with beauty and force by Aristotle's master in the *Philebus*. It is simply the Delphic motto, 'Nothing in excess,' restated in an attempt to reduce to an exact statement the general principle of caution, common-sense, avoidance of extremes. 'Excess or deficiency of gymnastic exercises is fatal to strength.... A person who avoids and is afraid of everything and faces nothing becomes a coward; a person who is not afraid of anything but is ready to face anything becomes foolhardy.' Here, as in respect of the Good, Aristotle warns us that it is not a question of anything universal, absolute, mathematically defined. The absolute Mean might conceivably be ascertainable, but it would be of little value. It is the relative Mean, varying with each individual, that is the practical thing. The wise and profitable Mean of diet and training for the professional wrestler will be an extreme for the ordinary person. 'This being so, everybody who understands his business avoids alike excess and deficiency; he seeks and chooses the Mean, not the absolute Mean, but the Mean considered relatively to ourselves.'

So far then we have our final end stated to be the attainment of Happiness, virtue defined as the fundamental condition of Happiness, and habit named as the supreme instrument for the training in virtue, the principle of the Mean to be our guide throughout. Finally, just as Plato when he reached a somewhat similar point in his discussion, having stated his case for the education of his 'guardians' through

environment and habit, realized that he must further train them in the power of abstraction and conscious selection, so too does Aristotle. He lays it down that man in the realization of his rational function must *consciously* select virtue if he is to be called virtuous. ‘Actions in accordance with virtue are not, e.g., temperately performed because they are in themselves just or temperate. It is necessary that the agent at the time of performing them should satisfy certain conditions; i.e., in the first place, that he should know what he is doing, second, that he should deliberately choose to do it and to do it for its own sake, and thirdly, that he should do it as an instance of a settled and immutable moral state.’ In short, just to the extent that what is relatively pleasant is absolutely good are we in a state of moral health, and the conscious, willing, and habitual expression of this action is virtue.

If all this sounds academic, prosaic, stiff, even dull, and we had said so to Aristotle — though he is not often really dull — he no doubt would have assured us that when philosophy becomes amusing it is not philosophy, and that meticulous precision is an essential to scientific thinking. Plato’s flights of fancy and sense of humor must have annoyed his pupil profoundly. Yet to us Aristotle’s own procedure, so admirable in its way, was as one-sided as a mathematical interpretation of Isaiah or of a sunset. Truth is larger than accuracy, as we well know, and the value of facts depends on many things besides their objective solidity. Truth is larger also than logic, and an exhaustive analysis often only puts to flight the very thing we are trying to capture. Aristotle had, in fact, a serious blind spot that he might possibly have admitted with pride — lack of imagination. And that

lack made him feeble and overcautious in synthesis, unable to see even facts if they were outside his immediate purpose, and unwilling to take account of them if they seemed irrelevant to his specific and predetermined plan.

That overcaution might account for a curious and instructive limit of range in his greatest work, the *Politics*. During the last twenty years of his life the city-states practically ceased to exist. So that as a student of government Aristotle stood in a unique position, on a ridge between two eras, the one finished, the other hardly begun. He had before him the completed story of the one political form that the Greeks had found really congenial, the form with which they had tried every possible experiment. But those experiments were ended (except for the federal experiment of the Achaian and Ætolian Leagues, unconsidered by Aristotle as a possibility and foredoomed to failure) and a new one of a totally different type was under way. Now the philosopher outlived Alexander. He must have been familiar with the whole course of events that led to the enforced union of the Greeks under their northern masters. Yet he showed no sign that he was even aware of the tremendous change in his world's political outlook that was taking place before his eyes. The state to him meant the city. For him Chaeronea had not occurred, or Babylon become the center of a Greek empire, or the kingdom supplanted the *polis*.

Yet it was in the *Politics* that Aristotle was at his best, nevertheless. Blind as he was to what was going on around him, limited as he was by his city-state point of view and hampered by his effort to be both logical and true to his facts, his genius broke through his self-imposed barriers and produced some of the most illuminating comments on society

ever made. His dictum that the nature of anything is to be found in its final cause, i.e., its fulfilled purpose, that the state is essential to man's fulfilment, that in fact man is a political animal, is quoted at least once each year in every college in the civilized world. That 'the state is prior to the family and to the individual since the whole is of necessity prior to the part' opens up the whole problem of the relation of the organism to its functioning elements. 'The form of government is best in which every man, whoever he is, can act for the best and live happily,' might be a quotation from Montesquieu. And such generalizations are quite characteristic. They are based partly on logic, partly on the streak of Plato that Plato's mutinous pupil might have indignantly repudiated, partly on close inspection of the constitutions and revolutions of scores of states, on special cases critical examinations, detailed comparisons. At any rate and for whatever reasons, Aristotle had now and then to put his facts together and see them as alive. That is true of all his works, but it is especially and brilliantly true of the *Politics*.

In the main, though, he tried to follow the rule 'that as in other departments of science so in politics, the compound should always be resolved into the simple elements composing it.' And inadequate as the rule may be for the study of an organism, it served him well for the mechanical phase of his subject which was after all his main interest. In spite of his occasional signs of a biological point of view, he shared the Hellenic indifference to history; the constitutions he examined were seen as completed structures; and even his elaborate accounts of changes and revolutions are as if he were surveying different types of a machine and explaining which

parts were most apt to break or wear out. But not only is that way of approaching the science of politics of value at any time — it was peculiarly the Greek way. Even Plato's description of the rise of a city is analytic, not historical. To take a thing apart in order to find the essential thing in it was the obvious procedure. And Aristotle did after all add another suggestion, the looking ahead to the completed end to find the 'essence' — a brilliant suggestion that he did not use a great deal, but that had a profound influence later on. It is possible, indeed, that the perennial fascination of the *Politics* for students of government rests, not on its wisdom alone, but on its hesitations, its reconsiderings, its incompleteness, its truths half apprehended, its unfulfilled promises, its signs of an eager and powerful mind grappling with material too alive and complex for systematic treatment. But however that may be, it is one of the great books, sober, wise, patiently intent on reducing confusion to order, a noble summing-up of the political experience of the Greek people.

It is in this careful, thoughtful, systematic way that Aristotle meets all his problems. It is as if he knew that he stood at the end of an epoch and were looking calmly back over it in a final survey. For before he laid down his pen or gave his last lecture he had given form, by analysis, criticism, definition, and classification, to all of the fundamental ideals and spiritual achievements of his race. His doctrine of the Mean is the result of an evolution that had begun with the *aidōs* of Homer and Hesiod, had grown into the *sophrosune* and 'measure' of the poets, of Solon, and of Herodotus, and had found its noblest expression in the 'justice' of Plato. His list of the virtues is a moral critique of the poets from Homer

to Æschylus. Even his fixing on Happiness as the supreme good is characteristically Greek. But he was equally true to the genius of his people in his refusal to identify happiness with pleasure, in his insistence on the idealism that stamps everything Greek, the harmonious subordination of every detail — whether in a poem, a statue, or man himself — to the essential thing that makes the details intelligible, whether we call it essence, Substance, Form, or Idea. Plato's emphasis on the Idea, Aristotle's search for the completed end, are the philosophic formulation of the same principle that is embodied in every Greek statue or vase — the dislike of the eccentric, of the accidental, and the love of what is universal, fundamental, absolute.

Summing up, then, Aristotle's permanent contribution was in range of vision and in scientific method. His search for law, his genius for comparison and deduction, his emphasis on classification and definition, his persistent analysis, his constant effort to see the meaning and bearing of facts in relation to function and to allow no generalization that does not spring naturally from thoughtful observation, make him the first great scientific thinker of Europe, the first at any rate of whom we have adequate record. He had predecessors, of course, in the fields of mathematics, geography, astronomy, and physics. His distinctive characteristic was not originality. But it was his task and his achievement to give unity, aim, and method to the whole field of thought, to gather together the scattered and fragmentary lines of investigation from the Ionians to the Sophists and Plato, to show them in their relation, and to chart them clearly for the investigators that should come after him. Nevertheless, when we see him in his place in the history of the Greek genius, when we com-

pare him with his Master, there is something that we miss, something dynamic and magnificent. Plato was of the prophets, Aristotle only the greatest of the scribes. The 'master of those who know' was the voice of an age from whose spirit the divine fire was fading away forever.

## CHAPTER XV

### *The Last Phase*

ALEXANDER THE GREAT died in 323 B.C. It is not wholly without reason that many historians have brought their narratives to a close with that event. In their eyes it marks the close of an era. Yet it is unfortunate too. If any one such event marks the close of an era it is the battle of Chaeronea fifteen years earlier, grotesque as it would seem to end the story of the Greeks without including Alexander. But neither date ‘closes an era,’ and for an historian to imply that it does creates a misunderstanding. It results in the reader’s mind being brought violently against an artificial partition; he is told, practically, that further progress in that direction is a waste of time, and he is bidden to turn to quite another road — that of Rome. But if this is wrong, it is not inexcusable. The change wrought by Alexander in the Greek world was deep, permanent, and far-reaching. The departure of his gigantic figure from the stage seems in truth to indicate the end of a long and tremendous drama. After him Hellas seems hardly to be Hellas.

The change was no doubt most evident in politics. The political life of fifth-century Greece centered in the city-state. The city-state, in the older sense, was a thing of the past when Alexander died. The cities themselves remained, many of them, with a complete or almost complete self-government. But their pride was gone, and such independence as they retained was held on sufferance. They stood at the mercy first of Alexander, then of the military chief who happened

to sway their region. To defy their Macedonian overlord was to court destruction. Their political ambitions, their party conflicts, their spasmodic efforts to assert themselves were mere eddies and splashes in a great stream whose new and mighty floods were wiping out and reshaping all the marks of the old bed.

Moreover, a new type of Greek had come into existence. Almost are we tempted to say that the Greek himself, as distinguished from this or that kind of Greek, had come into existence. Spartans and Athenians, Corinthians and Milesians, Aetolians and Achaians had fought for years side by side with Macedonians and Asiatics under the banner of a half-Greek and half-Thracian king, and then come back by companies and brigades to their cities after campaigns that had taken them across the Nile and the Jordan, the Euphrates and the Tigris, the Oxus and the Indus. Still others remained in Egypt, Syria, or elsewhere as permanent settlers in a Greater Hellas. No matter what their attitude had been toward the mighty plan that had been the king's ambition, they had all shared in it. They had been changed as an Englishman, a German, or a Swiss is changed who lives for ten years in Texas, in Alberta, in New South Wales, or in Rhodesia. For these Greeks did not live in Babylon or camp in Samarkand as Athenians or Corinthians, but as Greeks, as soldiers of Alexander. They might retain their European and Hellenic prejudices and ways of living, but city patriotism would vanish and cosmopolitanism or at least a larger Hellenism would take its place.

So post-Alexandrian Hellas was no longer a loose aggregation of city-states, but a group of kingdoms whose power extended far into the lands of the 'barbarians,' and the

Hellenes of Greece, of Asia, of Syria, and of Egypt were less separated spiritually than were the Hellenes of Sparta, Athens, and Corinth a century before. Something, no doubt, was lost. The new dispensation produced no *Æschylus* and no Sophocles, no Plato and no Thucydides. But if there was some mighty magic in fifth-century Athens that had vanished from the earth in the third century, there was at least some recompense. The barriers of Hellenism were broken down. The language and the ideas of Hellas were scattered broadcast over the eastern world. The time was coming when Antioch and Alexandria, named after Greeks, should rival Athens herself, when the Jewish scriptures had to be translated into Greek to make them accessible to Hebrews, when a Jew could win the attention of Athenians under the shadow of the Acropolis, and write to his friends at Ephesus and Corinth in the language of Aristotle.

The result was a civilization Hellenic and yet not Hellenic, preserving and spreading the Greek language, yet in a form that the fifth-century writers would have thought clumsy and uncouth, developing Greek philosophy and art along lines that Plato and Phidias could not have approved, with all of the old intellectual eagerness and quickness, with even a broader and more catholic range of vision and interest, but with less idealism, less appreciation of the virtue of *sophrosune*. It was, we have said, Greek and yet not Greek, but that is not true, or is true only if we refuse to call anything Greek unless it belongs to the century or century and a half that follows Marathon. The England of Pope was not the England of Shakespeare, the England of Ruskin was not the England of Horace Walpole, but it was England, nevertheless. The Greek world in the year 300 b.c. was not that of

the year 400 B.C., but it was still Hellas — Hellas in another phase. And for convenience the word ‘Hellenistic’ has been coined to describe Greek civilization after Alexander, to distinguish it from the pre-Alexandrian, the Hellenic.

One caution is necessary, indeed. Deep and far-reaching as were the results of Alexander’s conquests, the Hellenic mind had begun to undergo its great change long before the conquest of Asia. Difficult as it is to define it with precision, we may say that the change in art, for instance, meant a loss of idealism and of intellectual and spiritual motive, and a new striving to give direct, sensuous pleasure; that the change in language was away from dialect and toward a standardized Greek tongue, not Attic and not Doric; that the change in thought was away from the speculative and toward the practical, away from metaphysics and toward ethics on the one hand, mathematical and physical science on the other. And all of these were clearly evident before the conquests of Alexander. But it is nevertheless true that if we do not yield to the temptation — so common and so seductive — to see in one event a too absolute turning-point, the reign of Alexander does serve as a landmark.

The political events of the generation following Alexander’s death may be briefly summarized. For twenty years there was almost constant war between the generals of Alexander, or, as these disappeared one by one from the scene, between their sons and successors. Each had been assigned his province or satrapy, but Ptolemy alone, whether satisfied with Egypt or convinced that much more was not to be obtained, refrained from an effort to gain control over the whole empire. The matter was finally contested and settled in one great battle at Ipsus in Phrygia (301 B.C.) and when

the smoke cleared away the result was as follows. Macedon (with a practical but more or less loosely exercised supremacy over Greece), Syria, and Egypt were separate kingdoms. Macedon never again produced a Philip or an Alexander, but under the descendants of Antigonus, the great king's ablest general, she remained the controlling power in the Balkan peninsula until the Roman conquest a century and a half later. Syria, with Persia and the provinces of the East, fell to Seleucus and remained in the hands of his family until the motley empire was divided between the Romans and the Parthians. Egypt was the domain of Ptolemy, whose descendants ruled the land of the Nile long after the fall of the Antigonids and the Seleucids, their line ending at last with Cleopatra. These were the three 'Great Powers' of the third century east of the Adriatic. Of lesser states, Epirus, a little seacoast kingdom west of Macedon, famous only because of a brief but spectacular clash with Rome, Pergamum in northern Asia Minor, and the free Greek city of Rhodes, are perhaps the most notable. Athens — still the most brilliant center of Greek thought and art — the Achaian and Ætolian Leagues, and Sparta retained a precarious independence, but had little more influence on the politics of the period than, say, Portugal, Switzerland, or Denmark on the politics of contemporary Europe.

Of all the Greek states of the third century, Egypt was not only the longest-lived but the most interesting to the modern student. The first three Ptolemies, able and in the main enlightened despots, succeeded in making their navy the most powerful in the eastern Mediterranean, in holding a loose but quite real protectorate over islands and coast cities as far north as Lemnos, and in developing maritime

trade until Alexandria was as surely the main commercial dépôt of the eastern Mediterranean as Carthage of the western. The new city at the mouth of the Nile became not only the most cosmopolitan in the world — at once Greek, Jewish, and Egyptian — but second only to Athens as a center of culture. Indeed, in some respects she was first rather than second. Yet there is a dark side to the story of the Ptolemies. Their splendor was made possible by a grinding tyranny over the native population. Not only was the king the absolute landowner of the whole valley of the Nile — as the Pharaohs had always been — but he was the owner, both in theory and in fact, of Egyptian manufacture and commerce, fixing prices and extorting profits to the extreme limit. ‘Even in far-distant Delos the price of paper, myrrh, and other articles was fixed by the royal monopolist.’<sup>1</sup> The income of every man in Egypt was regulated by the will of the king.

But for our purposes the political divisions of the third century, the intrigues, the wars, the ambitions, and the administrative measures of the Macedonian princes are less important than the ever-active works of the Greek mind, as it sought to probe, to estimate, to express its adjustment to the changed and changing world. The essential fact of the latter part of the fourth century is the conquest of Asia, the breaking down of barriers, the scattering of Hellenism broad-

<sup>1</sup> Ferguson, *Greek Imperialism*, p. 170. One result of some interest was the substitution of parchment for paper. Parchment was, of course, a much older writing material than paper, but it had been largely displaced, and its revival was Pergamum’s device for meeting Egypt’s high prices. The word ‘paper’ is *papyrus*, largely an Egyptian product; so the word ‘parchment’ is derived from *pergamentum* — or *pergamena charta*. Parchment is simply a form of leather, and the Pergamenes adapted it and improved it to meet this particular need.

cast over Syria, Egypt, and the lands of the East. The essential fact of the third century is the growth and fruition of the seeds planted by Alexander and his soldiers on the one hand, by philosophers, poets, and artists on the other, the reaction, in short, of a new environment on the Hellenic organism. The wars and policies of a Seleucus or a Ptolemy could not seriously modify the situation. And as we turned from the battles of Athenians and Spartans to consider the teaching of Socrates and Euripides, so we must put aside the schemes of Alexander's successors to discuss achievements far more distinctively Greek and of infinitely more value to mankind, the achievements of scholars, poets, and thinkers.

Aristotle, more than most Greeks, certainly more than any of his predecessors, had felt the need at once of facts and of clear distinctions. In his genius for inductive method, in his constant desire to relate his thinking to observed facts and to organize it clearly, he was the apostle of a new movement that we may well honor with the name of science. And scientific thinking, albeit in the limited sense of collection, classification, specialization, and interest in things that are susceptible of observation and exact statement, became characteristic of Aristotle's successors of the Lyceum. Thus his successor in the school at Athens, Theophrastus, developed the science of botany, while others devoted themselves to philology, literary criticism, the history and theory of music. While one may not say that the science of the third and second centuries owed its origin or even its main inspiration to Aristotle, yet he was certainly its greatest prophet.

The center of the scientific world from the time of the first Ptolemy was, however, not Athens but Alexandria. Here was founded the first institution that will bear a parallel to the

modern university, the twin foundation of the Library and the Museum. It was the aim of the kings to include in the Library a copy of every Greek work in existence, and it may be that they succeeded. In the Museum, the home of the Muses, poets, scholars, and philosophers worked in peace under the patronage of the king, seeking both to add to the sum of Greek wisdom and to organize, verify, illustrate, and interpret what was already known. On the whole the work of the Alexandrians was threefold: the collecting and editing of the classics, the classification and advancement of knowledge, and the production of a literature that should express the spirit of the new cosmopolitan Hellas. The first was worth doing and was well done. The second and third varied greatly in value, but such as they were they formed the basis of the science and literature of Rome.

In the advancement, as distinguished from the classification, of knowledge, Alexandrian science labored under heavy handicaps. Much that it accomplished was of doubtful value. Yet something worth while was achieved and in some fields the debt of civilization to the workers of the Hellenistic age is quite incalculable. Euclid, in the time of the first Ptolemy, laid the first solid foundation for the science of geometry — a science by no means unknown before his time, but never before surveyed and plotted out so exactly and comprehensively. Eratosthenes (about 276–194 b.c.), grammarian, geographer, and mathematician, a man of whose manifold interests we would gladly know more, succeeded in roughly measuring the circumference of the earth, and made the first systematic effort to reduce the history of the past to an exact chronology. Hipparchus (about 150 b.c.) did more than any other one man to sum up the astronomical knowledge

of the ancient world. He added to observation the application of mathematics, and his system of astronomy served as the basis of that of the more famous Ptolemy (Claudius Ptolemaeus, fl. about A.D. 140), a later Alexandrian whose theory of the Universe prevailed until modern times.<sup>1</sup> And these, with the physicists Archimedes and Hieron, are only the most distinguished names of a multitude.

The most notable defect of Alexandrian science, indeed of all Greek science, is its failure to discover with any real clearness and grasp the prodigious thing that we call experiment. And perhaps the second defect, related to the former, is the failure to appreciate the importance of accuracy. But behind these is something more fundamental — a lack of interest in anything not human. When a Greek considered man and all his ways and expressed himself thereon in literature, in art, or in reflection, he was roving in his own peculiar domain. When he abandoned his own field there was only one other department of thought in which he achieved distinction. This was mathematics, and it was hardly an exception, for the interest in mathematics was akin to the interest in gymnastics; it sprang from a pure joy in mental exercise, in mental discipline and victory. The problems of number and space did undoubtedly fascinate many powerful minds throughout Hellas, and the result was far from inconsiderable. Plato, Euclid, Archimedes, Eratosthenes, Hipparchus, and the later Ptolemy are all notable names in the history of pure and applied mathematics. But if we except the work of one mighty genius, Archimedes of Syracuse, and

<sup>1</sup> The incorrect assumption of Hipparchus and Ptolemy that the sun and planets moved about the earth in circular orbits was accepted until the time of Copernicus (1543), Galileo (1564–1642), and Kepler (1571–1630).

perhaps of one other, Hieron of Alexandria, nothing was done in the fields of physics, chemistry, or biology that the world has not had to unlearn before it could find the right road to progress.

Perhaps the largest part of the work of the Alexandrian scholars was in the fields of philology, grammar, and literary criticism. And in this atmosphere of analysis, research, and learning there was produced a vast literature. Alexandrian poetry consisted in the main of short, highly polished poems — epigrams, idylls, elegies, and the like — with a few epics, nearly all poetry of erudition rather than of insight and inspiration. With two exceptions to be noted later the literature of the Hellenistic age is learned, finished, uninspired, doomed to remain, as it is today, unread and unknown by all except the students of the history of literature and thought. But the undoubted influence that it exercised on the Romans does save it from total oblivion. This has been expressed so well by Professor Mackail that we shall simply quote his words without adding further comment:

That their poetic production was mingled with pedantry is true; it is also true that in their inferior work the pedantry is more conspicuous than the poetry. But we must go deeper. If they did not care for poetry, why did they practice it so incessantly and with such pains and devotion? The reason is simply this: that the center of poetry having been lost, they were trying their best to find it. In this attempt they did not fully succeed. But if they did not recover poetry they made a serious advance on the way toward its recovery. They ploughed the fallows, and prepared the field for new seed. The Latin genius entered into the field they had prepared. The Alexandrians were the interpreters of Hellas and the forerunners of Ausonia.

In either way their effective value in the life of poetry can hardly be overestimated. They filled up with their bodies, one might almost say, the gap that might otherwise have become an impassable chasm. They kept the poetry of the past alive, and nursed the seeds of the poetry of the future. But for them Greek poetry might have perished out of the world. But for them Latin poetry might never have come to the birth.<sup>1</sup>

The value of Alexandrian literature is not, however, solely historical. In the midst of so much that only preserved the past for the future, with no living contribution of its own, two new or almost new, motives appeared which were both interesting and fruitful — the love of men and women as forming the central interest of a romance, and the pleasure in rural and pastoral life. The literary motive of romantic love had been foreshadowed, no doubt, by Euripides, but only foreshadowed. In Alexandrian literature one finds it everywhere, in the most unexpected places. Thus the astronomical poem of Eratosthenes, the *Hermes*, must lighten the details of stars and constellations by telling of the passion of Hermes for Kypris, not casually as Homer would have done, but at length and with sensuous luxury of description. The antiquarian poem of Callimachus, the *Aitia*, finds space in the midst of its catalogues of rituals and ceremonies for the love story of Acontius and Cydippe, each more beautiful than the other, who are stricken with the arrows of the love-god at a feast of Delos, and after long miseries due to the opposition of cruel parents are happily united in the true fashion of mediæval and modern romance.

The best extant example of the Hellenistic romantic tale

<sup>1</sup> J. W. Mackail, *Lectures on Greek Poetry*, p. 184.

is, however, the *Argonautica* of Apollonius of Rhodes. We know a little about Apollonius himself, and that little gives us an interesting side-light on his time. Driven from Alexandria to Rhodes by the jealous hatred of his powerful teacher and rival Callimachus, he returned to the Egyptian city with an assured reputation as might an Englishman of today who should fail in London to succeed in New York or Paris, and who should come back to his own land with the glamor of a triumph gained in a city not his own. The *Argonautica* is the real source of our accepted version of Jason and the Golden Fleece. It centers largely on the loves of Jason and Medea, and with all of its mythological learning it is full of a real joy in adventure, in marvelous episodes of magic and Olympian power, and in the potent witchcraft of love. The tragedy of Medea is the forerunner of the tragedy of Dido, and the *Argonautica* is the link between the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid*.

The second exception to our broad statement regarding Hellenistic poetry is important, not only because it represents a new interest, but also because it was the chosen field of the last of the great Greek singers, Theocritus. This was the pastoral or bucolic. Theocritus was not, of course, an ancient Wordsworth. He does not adore Nature herself so much as the simple life, the life that lives in intimate contact with Nature. His idylls are peopled with shepherds and shepherdesses, and he delights in the sounds of the pastures and the hillsides. In a busy age of commerce and of industry, of splendid courts and rapidly acquired riches, of mental and physical dissipation, of an artificial, highly refined, and somewhat *blasé* civilization, they represent a reaction such as that symbolized by the paintings of Greuze in the feverish

atmosphere of the old régime, or by Marie Antoinette's little hamlet in the Petit Trianon. They became the model for a class of bucolic poetry that has persisted to our own time, with a phraseology — itself soon to become artificial — that one may see in Virgil and in Spenser, in Lycidas and in the Scholar Gypsy. Theocritus wrote poems of other moods, some of them charming enough, and at least one — the fifteenth idyll, vividly picturing a scene in Alexandria — is in the first rank of descriptive, realistic poetry. But as the poet of the Sicilian pasture lands he is supreme, above all contemporaries and all successors.

And among these poets and scholars and scientists moved, restlessly, the philosophers — probing, debating, weaving phrases of Socrates and Plato into ingenious patterns, busy for the most part with 'vain imaginations, vain altercations, and vain affectations,' Academics contending with Peripatetics, Cynics with Cyrenaics. Too critical to be constructive, too intent on subtle and speculative dialectic to keep any solid sense of value, they had the merits and limitations that Bacon, ages later, found in those who 'out of no great quantity of matter and infinite agitation of wit spin out laborious webs of learning — admirable for the fineness of thread and work, but of no substance or profit.' But in Athens, so long the home of philosophy, there arose at the end of the fourth century two teachers of whom this was not true, Zeno and Epicurus. And their followers, the Stoics and Epicureans, became apostles and types of two ways of salvation — one taking the word 'pleasure,' the other the word 'duty,' as the clue to a wise and happy life.

Scholars and philosophers have been inclined to regard the 'pleasure' doctrine of Epicurus with a disapproving eye.

And it was, no doubt, demoralizing. Nevertheless, to the historian it is not without significance, and it was given weight and fame apart from its strictly philosophic value by the great poem of Lucretius *On the Nature of Things*. Moreover, it represents an answer to the eternal question of philosophy — ‘What is the nature of the world we live in and what is man’s place in it?’ — that is peculiarly congenial to the modern mind. It is futile, said the Epicurean, to look for meaning in the sense of purpose. There is none. The universe is a chance combination of atoms, and man’s concern in it is like man’s concern in a whirlpool, to keep one’s head above water, worry as little as possible about waves and rocks, and have as good a time as conditions permit. Things are just what they are, neither benevolent nor diabolical; if I am happy, life is a success, and if I am unhappy, life is a failure; either way it is my own affair and to follow the way of pleasure is the only sensible thing to do — cautiously, not being deceived by joys that bring pain, but pursuing happiness as the only real good, nevertheless. It does sound extraordinarily plausible, and it may even be judged stimulating, since it throws the responsibility for success and happiness solely on the individual himself, refusing both trust in a helpful God and fear of an angry one. Nevertheless, if it had been the characteristic Hellenic philosophy there would have been no Hellenes. It was and is a philosophy of evasion and surrender, a familiar and seductive response to a mood rather than a solution of life’s riddle.

A very different way of salvation was taught by the half-Asiatic Zeno in the Painted Porch, the *Stoa* which gave its name to the earnest group that gathered there. All of the most positive, constructive suggestions of their predecessors

the Stoics embodied in doctrines that were to influence profoundly Roman law and Christian ethics, even Christian theology — doctrines of duty, of endurance, of divine omnipotence and human brotherhood that even now, in many Christian minds, obscure or reinterpret the teachings of Christ. To the universal and accidental drift of the Epicurean atoms the Stoics opposed the Pythagorean assertion of Cosmos, universal order, plus the guess of Anaxagoras — transformed into a dogma — that all things were arranged by Reason, and plus also the organic, dynamic, alive implication in the familiar word *Physis*, Nature, the word they liked best.<sup>1</sup> The Universe is ruled by Law; it is the expression of supreme Reason; it is a perfect harmony — or would be if it were not for man's folly; it is alive and purposeful. You could express all this by the words Cosmos, Nature, Reason (*Logos*), God, or Zeus, as you pleased, meaning the same thing by all of them. And obviously it is the clear duty of man as part of that immense, living, rational, and benevolent order to live in accord with it. 'Live in harmony with Nature' is the Stoic parallel to the Hebrew 'Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.'

So to an Epicurean every man is an atom among atoms. To a Stoic every man is an organic part of a divine order. Or, if this sounds too abstract and academic to be satisfying,

<sup>1</sup> *Physis*, the word from which we have physics and physiology and physiocrat, is the equivalent of the Latin *natura*, and 'nature' is the obvious English translation. But as with the English word there are complex and baffling shades of meaning and precise definition is practically impossible — which is perhaps part of its value. An excellent summary of the meaning of *physis* in early Greek usage is given by Walter Veazie in the Columbia University Studies in the History of Ideas (New York, 1918). The modern history of the word 'nature,' since — say — Thomas Hobbes, is even more exciting.

you could put it — as Cleanthes did — that we are all literally children of God. Not Greeks alone but all men are brothers, made equally divine by the *logos spermatikos*, the seed-bearing reason by which we are sons of Zeus. The barrier between Greeks and barbarians was broken by Zeno as well as by Alexander. So was the barrier between *polis* and *polis*. There was indeed little left of the old city patriotism by the beginning of the third century: the great kingdoms of Alexander's generals had supplanted the city-states: but it might be hoped by the devout Stoic that the *Cosmopolis* would supplant the artificial states of Seleucus and Ptolemy and all men be citizens of a world-city, the city of God. Though, indeed, the City of God already existed — not just eternal in the Heavens, but eternal in the whole realm of Nature — and all wise men were its citizens, free and self-sufficient in being masters of themselves, conforming willingly to the laws of the divine reason within them. And this Stoic conviction of an inner law, common to all men, *lex naturalis*, the Stoic emphasis of duty, of fortitude, of universal order, of the impregnable will that can make man master of his fate whatever storms may whirl around him — these were to influence all after ages. The Stoic creed was to rise again and assist at the birth of democracy and internationalism. There is a direct descent from Zeno to Thomas Jefferson.

Nevertheless, there is another side to it. If Epicureanism was a philosophy of defeat, a rationalizing of surrender, so also was Stoicism. The one abandoned 'trust in God'; the other overstressed it. Calvinism — the aspect of Christianity with which the Stoic doctrine is most often compared — is saved by its anthropomorphism. God, to a Calvinist, is not Nature, but the ruler of the universe He created, omni-

potent and all-wise, ruling by laws that are His personal decrees. If the whole duty of man is to bow to the commandments that he can no more help obeying than a stone can help falling, yet the necessity of submission is transformed into an intense, if illogical, activity by the sense of loyalty to an Almighty King. So the Calvinist — like a Mohammedan — can be at once a fatalist and a crusader, eager to co-operate in making the will of God prevail. But the Stoic — free indeed to obey or disobey and thereby win peace or confusion within his own soul — was aware that his attitude mattered only to himself: it could not alter the course of events by a hair's-breadth or earn even a 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant!' His obedience was a matter of duty, too impersonal to be passionate. His philosophy was the philosophy of a grain of dust blown by the wind — an intelligent grain of dust who could survey with reverent submission the mighty laws that drove him on his predestined flight.

Nevertheless, that one word made a world of difference. The wise man's apparently futile intelligence was not wholly futile. In his consciousness of the part he had to play and his will to play it, he felt himself part of the Universal Reason and could attain the melancholy happiness of a Marcus Aurelius — a happiness that reminds one of Piccarda's 'His will is our peace,'<sup>1</sup> Beyond question the Stoic faith gave noble consolation and strength to minds afflicted and overwhelmed by the sorrowful frustrations of life. But it could not save the world to which it offered only the peace of resignation. It sanctified passiveness. The rebellion and attack by which mankind advances were abhorrent to it. Its vir-

<sup>1</sup> Dante, *Paradiso*, c. III.

tues were fortitude and duty and conformity — conformity to reason and law, it is true, but conformity none the less. It was the philosophy of the Greek old age, a farewell to the eager initiative, the creative impatience, the adventurous curiosity that had made Pythagoras and Plato possible. It was a gospel, not for the free citizens of fifth-century Athens, but for the lawyers of Imperial Rome.

The essential facts of Hellas after the death of Alexander are clear. We see the breaking down of local barriers and the displacing of the Athenian, the Corinthian, the Ionian by the cosmopolitan Greek; the fading away of the city-states; the tendency in art toward individualism, sensuous grace, emotional appeal; a similar tendency in literature, with its comedies of manners and its romances; a shrinkage and hardening in thought as it narrowed its endeavors to the meeting and solving of the immediate, concrete problems of conduct, of physics, of mathematics; and a notable development of criticism, classification, and organization in all fields. Much remained of refinement, acuteness, even of splendor. But the magnificent range and vital power of Hellenic civilization had vanished; the shell was forming; and the Greek race, deprived of its old exuberant fertility, had to face a new world to whose problems it was unable to adjust itself. It still had a contribution to make. It was to play a leading part in the education of the Romans and in the preservation of its priceless heritage for the newer peoples who still roamed and hunted beyond the Rhine and the Danube, awaiting their destiny. But its great task of laying the foundations of western civilization was done.

So our story is told. Between the years 197 and 146 B.C., the Roman armies conquered Macedon and the mainland of

Greece. During the next century Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt were added to the *orbis terrarum*, the circle of lands about the Mediterranean that owned the sway of the senate and people of Rome. And yet if a critic were to suggest that we have been untrue to our own principle and made a political and military event the terminal point of our study, we should have to acknowledge guilt. The fall of Corinth before the army of Mummius in 146 b.c. was in many respects no more significant than the battle of Chæronea or the battle of Ipsus. It is, after all, not much more than a convenient stopping-place. Even if the Greek genius never again reached the heights of Æschylus and Plato, it assuredly did not die.

But the history of Stoicism and Roman law, of the Greek influence on Christian theology, of the Greco-Roman power that lingered on at Constantinople until the coming of the Turks, all this and the later story of revival and achievement in our own time seems like the tale of another people. The Greeks who laid the world under an eternal debt, whose story is a vital part of the history of our civilization, are not the lawyers of Justinian, nor the soldiers of Heraclius, nor the bishops of Nicæa, nor the contemporaries of Byron, but the heroes of Homer, the sailors of Salamis, the singers, the dramatists, the sculptors, the architects, the philosophers of Athens, the scholars of Alexandria. To say just when the change came that brought the history of the Hellenes to an end is impossible. Certainly the year 146 b.c. is sufficiently absurd. But absurd or not we shall close our narrative with that year, when the Greeks of the peninsula bowed their heads dejectedly before the conquering farmer-soldiers of the Seven Hills.

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